HECTOR HUGH MUNRO
b. Akyab, Burma, December 18, 1870
d. No Man's Land, near Beaumont-Hamel, France, November 14, 1916

(photo by E. O. Hoppé, circa 1911)

University of Alberta

BEASTLY HUMANS
AMBIVALENCE, DEPENDENT DISSIDENCE, AND METAMORPHOSIS IN THE FICTION OF SAKI

by

Brian Gibson ©

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ABSTRACT

The stylistic, thematic, and socio-historical tensions in Saki's short fiction are largely created by, and in turn reveal, the dependent dissidence of author-narrator Saki's satire, an ambivalence borne of Saki's constant, underlying subversion of the elite bourgeois world in which Hector Hugh Munro the Edwardian bachelor lived. My analysis of Saki's fiction traces a constant "dialogue of ambivalence" between the gentleman Munro and the authorial persona Saki, ending with the co-opting of the satirist persona by a dependent, conformist Munro.

In Chapter 1, I examine Saki's distinctive camp sensibility, which balances the serious and comic in stories of fierce, natural, unorthodox masculinity emerging from the wild to conquer complacent, urbane, heterosexual society. The rebelliousness of Saki's camp, however, is eventually denied and reversed by the anxiously macho soldier Munro. In Chapter 2, I examine Saki's supposed antipathy towards women and show that much of Saki's dislike is directed at aunts, the domineering female representatives of heteronormative society. Saki's appreciation for young women or girls and his occasional celebration of women as protagonists is problematized by a deep opposition to the female suffrage movement in the stories, which I argue is a displacement of Munro's masculine anxieties onto seemingly emasculating, militant women. In Chapter 3, I show how Saki — influenced by the journalist Munro's personal experiences — briefly attacks the roots of Edwardian anti-Jewish feeling and offers complex portrayals of Slavic Europe, only to be led by a later anti-cosmopolitan, militant Munro to fall back into easy stereotyping and simple romanticizations of a primal, wild Eastern Europe. Saki ultimately displaces Munro's masculine anxiety onto the easy, "Other" targets of Jews and Slavs. In Chapter

4, I explore Saki's meta-references to his own thematic preoccupations as attempts to subvert and satirize himself.

In the end, Saki's satirical attacks are curtailed by Munro's destructive efforts to merge with and so co-opt Saki in order to deny Munro's unorthodox masculinity by fervently embracing imperial British manliness. Munro abandoned his private London world for the trenches and, using Saki as a façade for conventional views rather than a separate, dissident persona, banged the drums for war and died for the very heteronormative, bourgeois, nationalistic Edwardian society which Saki often so artfully questions.

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Without the friendship of Peentoo Patel, the support of my parents, Gail and Jim Gibson, and of course the counsel and love of Robin Durnford, who has been with me through every loop, plunge, and crest on this long, crazy ride, I would never have made it to the end. And all my thanks to Beverly Durnford and to Sam Durnford, who would often ask me how my work was coming along — now, at long last, I can tell him that it is done.

FOR ROBIN

WIND, WATER, ROCK

A NOTE ON THE SOURCE TEXT AND APPENDICES

As many of Saki's stories were first published in newspapers (predominantly *The Westminster Gazette*, the *Morning Post*, or *The Bystander*), after the introduction of a Saki story in this dissertation, for immediate historical context, I have noted the original paper (e.g., *WG*, *MP*) and publication date in parentheses, where I have been able to track such information down (the entire, incomplete list can be found in Appendix Six). In most cases, page references to Saki's fiction refer to *The Penguin Complete Saki* (the 944-page, Penguin Twentieth-Century Classics reprint of the original 1976 edition, with the same pagination as the 2000 Penguin edition of *The Short Stories of Saki*); although this is the most extensive compilation of Saki's works, the collection's title is a misnomer.[1]

As of this writing, no complete anthology of Saki's stories exists. The Penguin text does not include: Munro's first published story "Dogged" (*St. Paul's*, February 1899; reprinted in Haining's Saki anthology, *Short Stories 2*, and once again here in Appendix One), Saki's political satires "The Political Jungle-Book" (*The Westminster Gazette*, February 11 and May 23, 1902), "The Woman Who Never Should" (*WG*, July 22, 1902), and "Not So Stories" (*WG*, October 9, 15, and November 5, 1902), "Heart-to-Heart Talks" (*The Bystander*, July 17, July 31, and August 14, 1912), a series of illustrated political verse satires in *The Bystander* (March 12 and April 2, 1913) and the *Daily Express* (April–May 1913), "The East Wing" (*Lucas' Annual*, September 1914; reprinted in the 1948, 1949, 1953 and 1956 editions of *The Bodley Head Saki* and again here in Appendix Two), the play "The Miracle-Merchant" (provenance unknown; published in the anthologies *One Act Plays for Stage and Study, Eighth Series*, New York: Samuel French, 1934 and *Modern One-Act Plays*, ed. Philip Wayne, Toronto: Longmans, Green, 1935), the six stories found in the British Library which were reprinted in the appendix to A. J. Langguth's 1981 biography,[2] and "Eve and the Forbidden Fruit: A Fragment of Incomplete History," included in Ethel Munro's 1924 "Biography of Saki" (henceforth referred to as "Biography") and Haining's anthology. Haining's collection also includes the original newspaper version of "Tobermory," before it was edited to include Clovis as a character, and Munro's article "An Old Love" (*MP*, April 23, 1915). Martin Stephen's anthology, *The Best of Saki* — based on the results of Stephen's *Daily Telegraph* poll of readers' favourite Saki stories — includes, as appendices, four pieces penned by 'Saki' while Munro was enlisted, all of which originally appeared in the *22nd Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers' Fortnightly Gazette*: "Diary of the War" (April 26, 1915), "Pau-Puk-Keewis" (May 10, 1915), "On being Company Orderly Corporal" (June 7, 1915; also reprinted in Ethel Munro's biography and in Haining's collection), and "The Soldier's Guide to Cinema" (June 26, 1915).

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[1] The photograph on the cover of the 1982 paperback edition of *The Penguin Complete Saki* is also a misrepresentation, as it is not a picture of Munro, but of A. P. Allinson (Stern 293). The photograph was taken by E. O. Hoppé, who also took the portrait of Munro reproduced above.

[2] Two of these stories, "The Holy War" and "A Sacrifice to Necessity," were first rediscovered and reprinted by James R. Thrane in "Two New Stories by 'Saki' with an Introduction," *Modern Fiction Studies* 19.2 (Summer 1973): 139-52. Inexplicably, Thrane never published the "five more such unreprinted stories" (142) he mentioned that were, presumably, "Dogged" and the other four stories in Langguth's appendix.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 1

Chapter 1 **"A FURTIVE SINISTER 'SOMETHING'"** **34**
Saki and Camp
- *Fin-de-Siècle* Dandyism and the Wilde Trials 35
- Saki's Post-Wilde Camp 40
- Reginald's Self-Satisfied T(h)reat 48
- Saki Camps in Earnest 60
- Sylv(i)an Hills 82
- The Panic of Saki's Camp 89
- Shock Waves 98
- Munro-Saki's Repudiation of Saki's Camp 105
- Munro's New Love 113

Chapter 2 **"THE THREAT"** **126**
Anti-Auntness, Misogyny, and Anti-Suffragettism in Saki's Fiction
- Munro's Auntie-Establishment 127
- Saki's Auntie-Marriage Avowal 135
- Uncommon Wives, New Women, and the Dandy 145
- Girls in Saki's Fiction 156
- A Different Class 165
- The Beastliness of Saki's Women 172
- Munro-Saki's Anti-Suffragette Backlash 178

Chapter 3 **"CROSS CURRENTS"** **201**
Anti-Semitism, Slavic Europe, and Britishness in Saki's Fiction
- Anti-Semitism in Edwardian England 203
- Munro's Jewish Accounts 209
- Saki's Satire of Anti-Semitism 212
- When Munro-Saki Came Back to Anti-Semitism 220
- Russian Steps 230
- Balkan States 242
- The "Other" and Imperial Masculinity 262

Chapter 4 **"'THE OUTCOME OF MY IMAGINATION'"** **267**
Saki's Metafiction
- Saki's *Rubáiyát* 269
- Mappined Terror 276
- Self-Reflections and Self-Disclosures 280

Sub-Alter Egos 288
Deconstructing Expectations in "The East Wing" 296

Conclusion **311**

Bibliography 333

Appendix One — "Dogged" by "H. H. M." (1899) 350

Appendix Two — "The East Wing" by Saki (1914) 355

Appendix Three — H. H. Munro's Business Letters to John Lane/The Bodley Head Publishing Company, 1911-15 360

Appendix Four — H. H. Munro's Letter to the Editor re: enlistment, *Morning Post*, August 5, 1914 404

Appendix Five — Schematic of the Writing Personas of Hector Hugh Munro 405

Appendix Six — Bibliography of Fiction by Munro/Saki 406

INTRODUCTION

Disobedience, in the eyes of any one who has read history, is man's original virtue. It is through disobedience that progress has been made, through disobedience and through rebellion.

— Oscar Wilde, "The Soul of Man Under Socialism," 1891

Only the great masters of style ever succeed in being obscure.

— Oscar Wilde, "Phrases and Philosophies for the Use of the Young," 1894

Mary Frances Munro was killed by a farm animal in rural England and, forty-four years later, her second son, Hector Hugh Munro, was felled by a single bullet in a war-ravaged part of the French countryside that had become No Man's Land. What little is known about their deaths reveals much about the pseudonymous life of Saki.

The pregnant Mary Munro, a mother of three who had recently returned to England after living with her husband in Burma, died in rural Devon in the winter of 1872: "There, in the safeness of western England, she was struck down by the kind of fate that her youngest child grew up to respect and celebrate. On a quiet country lane, a runaway cow charged Mary Munro" (Langguth 7).

In the third winter of World War I, that youngest child, Lance-Sergeant H. H. Munro, of the 22nd Royal Fusiliers, was shot in No Man's Land, near the French village of Beaumont-Hamel, on November 14, 1916; his body was never recovered.

The details of Mary Munro's freakish, fatal accident are sketchy, and even the fact of it is rarely mentioned in any books or articles about her son.[3] The above account comes from a 1981 biography by A. J. Langguth, who cites Munro's nieces, to whom he spoke in Belfast in 1979. Yet their account begs questions: from whom did they hear of Mary Munro's death? Where exactly did Mary Munro die and how? (Langguth states that it was from the resulting shock and miscarriage, but that may be conjecture; even the perpetrator is unclear — was the "cow" an overprotective heifer or a raging bull?[4]) But most importantly, how did the death of his mother affect Hector Hugh Munro's psyche and influence his writings as Saki?[5]

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[3] Langguth's account comes from Juniper Bryan, one of Munro's nieces, whom he interviewed in 1978 and 1979. Charles Gillen, in his biography *H. H. Munro (Saki)*, notes only that "Hector's mother died not long after he was born" (17). John Carey, in his introduction to an anthology of Saki stories, reiterates Langguth's account rather flippantly: "Mrs Munro met a runaway cow while walking in a Devon lane. A miscarriage and her death followed rapidly" (ix). J. W. Lambert, in his 1963 introduction to *The Bodley*

Munro's only sister, Ethel, who was four at the time, might have better recalled the circumstances of her mother's death than her nieces, or at least been told of the details at some point in her upbringing. Yet Ethel, in her 1924 biography of her younger brother, only mentions "our mother's death" (637) as an afterthought, in the midst of explaining that their father left the three siblings in Broadgate Villa, in Pilton (then on the outskirts of Barnstaple), to be raised by their aunts while he was stationed in Burma.[6]

Ethel does write extensively about her brother's death in World War I, emphasizing his patriotic contribution to England's army. Her memoir includes a long remembrance of Munro the soldier, written by his battlefield comrade W. R. Spikesman (708-14); Spikesman was right next to him when Munro shouted at another soldier, "Put

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Head Saki, does not mention the death but recounts the 1792 killing of a Munro ancestor by a tiger in India (8-9).

[4] The book jacket for Langguth's biography states that Munro's mother was "kicked and killed by a bull in a pasture," but the summarizing blurb also erroneously states that Munro's father "was serving in India in the Army" and is misleading about Munro's time as a journalist in France.

[5] Langguth wonders if, while writing "The Storyteller," in which an aunt tells her nieces about a little girl saved from a bull, "the fate of Hector's mother [had] occur[ed] to him?" (219) Carey muses, "What bearing this tragedy had on her son's later preoccupation with animals that attack women we can only surmise—but it can hardly have been insignificant" (ix).

[6] But a few paragraphs later, Ethel Munro leaves a tantalizing hint of her mother's death and its effect on one of their guardians: "we should have had more country walks than we ever got, there were lovely fields and woods quite handy, but Aunt Augusta wanted shops and gossip—also she was afraid of cows" (638).

that bloody cigarette out!" just before being shot in the head by the enemy, and so it is in his recollection that we are given the most reliable details possible of Munro's death. Yet neither Ethel nor anyone writing about her brother after her has ever mentioned what happened to his corpse; the uncredited information that "His body was not found" is posted on an Internet website, as a footnote.[7]

In the murkiness and inexactness of the details surrounding Mary Munro's and her son's deaths, then, the limits of a Munro biography and the gap between Hector Hugh Munro and Saki can be seen. For the details of Hector Hugh Munro's life that trickle down to the scholar are select, sketchy, vague, and always second- or third-hand. Ethel Munro destroyed her brother's letters and papers because, A. J. Langguth argues, she wished to erase "all traces of her brother's life that did not accord with the view of him she chose to present" (316).[8] Langguth suggests that Ethel could not stomach the supposition that her brother had been a homosexual (186).[9] Ethel's account of her brother is a frustratingly inconsistent, coloured memoir, ranging from nostalgia-tinged recollections of their childhood to an obvious reverence for and emphasis on his patriotic duties as a soldier. Most of her brother's letters that she reprints are from his 1893-94 attempt to be a policeman in Burma (Munro returned to England after coming down with seven fevers in thirteen months, according to Ethel [659], eventually returning home, "ghastly ill" [672] with malaria). She romanticizes her witnessing of Bloody Sunday in St. Petersburg as a grand adventure,[10] seems to have a disproportionate view of her importance in his life,[11] and her memoir is imbued with a childish naïveté and an absolute, iron-clad fondness for her brother. She concludes her account by acknowledging her censoriousness: "In writing all I have cared to tell of Hector's life . . ." (714). She admits that she did not know her brother that well (she seems to have seen little of him after 1900, as Langguth documents[12]), and prefers to let someone else encapsulate his mysteriousness:

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[7] "Related Items," <www.silentcities.co.uk/cemeteryn/newmunich.htm>, as of January 8, 2005. The site further notes that Munro is commemorated on the Thièpval Memorial and a link to the Roll of Honour on that memorial notes that the plaque for "MUNRO, L/Sgt. 225. 'A' Coy. 22nd Bn. Royal Fusiliers. Died 14th November 1916. Age 45." can be found on the monument's "Pier and Face 8C 9A and 16A." ("Thièpval Memorial, Somme." 2005. <http://www.silentcities.co.uk/cemeteryt/thiepvalmemMN.htm>. Accessed January 8, 2005.)

[8] Ethel merely notes in her biography: "I have kept, unfortunately, very few of his letters written from town. Some, in fact, I destroyed as soon as read, because my father insisted on reading any letters his sons ever wrote, and Hector and I sometimes had plans which we did not divulge to him at once" (673-74).

[9] Langguth conjectures that, after her brother died, "the absence of a young woman in his life would trouble Ethel" and led her to say that Munro had once been close to marrying an earl's daughter (186). When Rex Harrison asked for the rights to film *The Unbearable Bassington*, Ethel went with her niece to a matinee performance in which Harrison was starring, a Noel Coward play about two men who agree to live with one woman. Langguth writes that, according to the niece, Juniper Bryan, "Ethel was appalled by that hint of homosexuality" and refused Harrison permission (186).

> But a friend of Hector's, a man who knew him well, summed him up best of all, I think, in the following words: 'The elusive charm of the man-in-himself—this charm, being the perfume of personality, was even more subtly, strongly felt in his conversation than in anything he ever wrote. We who loved him as the kindliest of companions who was utterly incapable of boring a fellow-creature—man or dog or woman or cat or child of any age you like—always felt the keen sense of honour and strength of purpose and stark simplicity which were his essential qualities. As a companion he was an unfailing antidote to boredom. He loved to make an impracticable jest practical in action.' (695-96)

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[10] For example: "The next two days were very exciting, the Cossacks were doing some killing on their own account, and murdered some unfortunate students merely because they had called out insults to them" (684).

[11] Even though she saw little of her brother (see Footnote 12) and writes that Hector was talking in June 1916 of moving to Siberia after the war ended with a friend, the unworldly Ethel assumes that she will be part of such an exotic relocation: "This idea appealed strongly to me—I saw myself bringing up the rear with all the things he would find on arrival he ought to have brought and had not. It would have been a remarkable life, wild animals beyond the dreams of avarice, at our very doors, and, before long, inside them" (707).

[12] From 1896 until 1902, Munro lived in London, but then travelled Europe as a correspondent for the *Morning Post* for long stretches from 1902 until 1908. A lifelong spinster who lived with their father until his death in 1907, Ethel visited her brother in St. Petersburg in January 1905 and, after Colonel Munro's death, joined him for a holiday in Normandy. In 1908 or 1909, she moved to a cottage in Surrey that her brother bought for her (Langguth 157).

Yet the valued traits of this person who is both the man's friend — but to whom he refers as "Saki" — and Ethel's brother Hector are almost mythically vague: kind, non-boring, honourable, and joking, yet simple. Even in an interview for the publicity magazine of Saki's publisher, Munro revealed little to the writer of the piece: "But the personality of the man is frankly baffling, and he declines to talk about himself" (*Bodleian* interview, qtd. in Langguth 189). Cecil William Mercer (Munro's cousin and an author whose pen-name was Dornford Yates) remarked: "'unhappily I seem to remember so little of him. I remember him as very gentle, gay, smiling, but never laughing outright. I never saw or heard him laugh, but a smile was nearly always on his face. I think his personality must have been elusive'" (Lambert 35). Unlike Saki's protagonists, Munro, according to his cousin, "had no mannerisms, and any kind of pose he found detestable. Brilliant satirist as he was, you would never have believed this to look at him" (Drake 8). The more his sister, relatives, and friends are unable to articulate the "elusive" appeal of Munro the man, the more complex and fascinating an enigmatic figure he seems. A century later, biographers and critics have fared little better, still puzzled by, as Langguth explained, "how little Hector had ventured into society. Somerset Maugham recalled seeing him at a party or two, nothing more than that" (182); Adam Frost notes that Munro seems to have been "a resolutely private man with few friends and a dislike of small talk" ("The Letters of H. H. Munro" 199). Ethel's destruction of her brother's correspondence and other private writings not only erased any hope of learning about his private life from the most reliable source — the man himself — but long maintained the façade of her brother that Ethel wished to establish, and ruined any hope of narrowing down the motivations of, influences on, and inspirations of Saki, an Edwardian author whose 138 short stories, five plays, two novels, and dozens of sketches, political satires, and essays between 1899 and 1916 are still read and in print more than a century later.

Most Saki criticism has, then, focussed on Saki's literary context, and even Frost's 2000 dissertation is concerned, T. S. Eliot-like, with proving Saki's canonical stature and connections, thus evaluating and asserting the indefinable and impossible, the "importance of Saki" (8) in that nebulous, ever-expanding constellation of great authors. Various scholars suggest that Munro's and/or Saki's influences ranged from Swift, Carroll, Kipling, and Hardy to Gogol, Nietzsche, Darwin, and Gibbon.[13] But, apart from some references in Ethel Munro's memoir to books — including Lewis Carroll's Alice duology, which Aunt Augusta read to the three Munro children (644-45) — and plays by Wilde and Pinero that Munro scolds Ethel for not seeing in an 1893 letter from Burma (662), there is almost no record of the literature that Munro read or was even interested in. Ethel Munro, writing about her brother as Saki, not Hector, in a letter to George Spears included in the author's appendix to *The Satire of Saki*, maintained that "Saki's writing contemporaries had no influence on his style, which was unique, nor his subject matter" (August 19, 1952 letter, qtd. in Spears 120).

After Ethel Munro's memoir, then, in the face of a dearth of first-hand material from the private pen of Hector Hugh Munro, any biography of the man has had to work backwards — that is, to infer the life of Hector Hugh Munro from analyses and interpretations of the work of Saki the authorial persona. Most profiles of Saki and the biographies by Gillen and Langguth use extensive quotations from Saki's fiction, in order to fill up pages lacking substantial biographical material, to show how Saki's fiction was influenced by Munro's upbringing and to try to illuminate Munro's private life with Saki's public works. Langguth bases many of his conjectures and conclusions[14] about Munro's life — including his suppositions about Munro's homosexuality — on episodes and scenes from Saki's fiction. Yet any attempt to use Saki's offbeat satires[15] of the Edwardian world to reveal more about Munro's unknowable personal life is futile and misguided, since the fiction being used to supplement Munro's murky life is the fiction of Saki, a different voice and persona. Any biography of Munro necessitates an analysis of Saki, and vice versa, but such a work must consistently distinguish between the two. Instead, accounts of Munro have constantly laboured to reconcile him with Saki, as though fitting together two parts of a "'knowable' person" into a "stable, never-changing self" (Evans 23). As Mary Evans explains, however, "biography cannot represent . . . the 'whole' life of a person. Furthermore, this 'whole' person is in any case a fiction, a belief created by the very form of auto/biography itself" (1). Biographies are closer to fiction than truth because they are inevitably "a mythical construct of [present-day] society and our social needs" (1), particularly the naïve desire to see individuals' lives as a narrative (24) or "an organised and coherent process, in which rational choices are made" (1), and on which the collective influence of the writer's contemporary society is largely ignored or cannot be known (143). Any biography that reduces its subject to Munro-as-Saki is pointless, for such an account purports to reach some sort of truth about a man who lived a century ago and whose obscure private world is primarily related by suspect second-party anecdotes and recollections. Any biography of Munro-as-Saki misses the point, too, because Munro consistently tried to separate himself from Saki, and vice versa.

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[13] Such disparate suggestions only emphasize the futility of ascertaining the literary influences on Saki, whose marked and unusual style seems to have neither inheritors nor imitators. Janet Overmyer notes:

> That he is unique is at once obvious. Futile attempts to pin him down have at one time or another compared him to: the Restoration dramatists, John Dryden, Jonathan Swift, Alexander Pope, William Makepeace Thackeray, Robert Louis Stevenson, Rudyard Kipling, Max Beerbohm, Ronald Firbank, Charles Lamb, James Barrie, Eric Parker, Kenneth Grahame, Oscar Wilde, Aldous Huxley, Evelyn Waugh, and George Orwell. Other authors may also be added—Thomas Hardy and Roald Dahl, for instance. The very length of the list and diversity of authors indicate the difficulty of pigeon-holing Saki . . . (171)

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[14] Frost, in his dissertation, also offers conjecture or unreferenced statements, as when he notes, "Saki himself was vehemently opposed to experiments on live animals" (11).

[15] It is perhaps more accurate to talk of Saki's *satire*, as I consider Saki's writings to comprise a general satire of Edwardian society, rather than parody, as Dennis Denisoff assumes (120). Technically, Saki moves from a sort of anti-Menippean satire (where, in dialogues, Reginald exposes the ridiculousness of a society of which he remains defiantly a part) to an indignant, mordant mixture of Horatian (the narrative voice is urbane and witty) and Juvenalian satire (see Abrams 188-89); Abrams' definition of satire in general as a form that takes, as its target, a "butt that exists outside the work itself" (187) raises the question of whether or not satire can be independent of its targets, a question central to this work.

Munro created this separation by taking a pen name. Langguth writes that "Self-baptism, the taking of a pen name, is one of those decisions . . . that makes a man for the moment his own father" (60). But "Saki" was a persona, another self, and what it revealed was a separate character from the person or persona we know so little of as "Hector Hugh Munro." Adrian Room writes in *A Dictionary of Pseudonyms and Their Origins, with Stories of Name Changes*, "Our names not only identify us, they *are* us: they announce us, advertise us, and embody us. . . . many people choose a new name simply because they feel that the name itself can bestow a new image and a new persona" (7). In attempting to establish an authorial persona, Munro was trying to separate himself from the stories, novels, and plays that revealed a consistent narrative voice, distinct from the tones and styles of *The Rise of the Russian Empire* and the newspaper correspondence; he was attempting "to dissociate oneself with one's former, 'real' self" (10). Ginsburg explains:

> The tactics of choosing a pseudonym is a complicated way of dealing with the question of origin. The author who chooses to use a pseudonym wants to upset the 'normal' relationship according to which he is the 'father' of his works; he wants to be himself an offspring of his own imagination. . . . The desire then not to be the origin, the author of one's work, is a desire not to have oneself an origin, a 'father,' to be self-originating, self-generating. (543-44)

The separation between Munro and Saki, based on writing mediums, forums, styles, subject matter, and aim, was never wholly kept by publishers, as Gillen notes: "Munro used this *nom de plume* for the rest of his life, but his books were published with the name 'H. H. Munro' in brackets under 'Saki' on their title pages" (163).[16] Yet, once established with the popular series of Alice-in-Wonderland political satires (later collected as *The Westminster Alice*), the identity of Saki was soon maintained; Munro continued to differentiate his writing from Saki's and vice versa (although the distinction between them was muddied as the war approached, as I explain later), clearly feeling the need to stamp out separate impressions of his selves. Room notes, "A different genre, a different period, a different approach, a different publisher, a different language, a different self — a writer can identify the difference by simply adopting a new name" (24). What, though, of the significance of this new name?

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[16] Apparently, Saki felt that there was an obvious enough connection in the public's consciousness between him and H. H. Munro that he wrote to the Hector Munro who published the novel *Mrs. Elmsley* with Constable in 1911, "requesting that he stopped [sic] writing under the name Hector Munro as confusion between the two authors was likely to arise," as the lesser-known Mr. Munro's great-grandson explains, adding that "this strikes me as a somewhat cheeky request, given that Saki wrote under a pseudonym" ("Saki's hoax," Letters, *Times Literary Supplement*, Nov. 5, 2004, p. 19). The similarity certainly did cause confusion ninety-odd years later, when scholar Michael Connor claimed to have rediscovered "Saki's lost novel" (*TLS*, Aug. 1, 2003) even though the long volume concerned a heterosexual love affair, socialism, and criticism of the decadents. Until the true author's great-grandson, Rob Cohen, contacted him, Connor believed the claim by Montague Summers in his autobiography *The Galanty Show* that Hector Hugh Munro had given Summers a copy of the book and told him, "'I wrote it under the influence of Balzac'" ("Saki's hoax," Letters, *TLS*, Oct. 29, 2004, p. 17). Presumably, Connor missed Langguth's note on *Mrs. Elmsley* in his 1981 biography: "Some critics have wondered whether Hector was dissuaded from using his own name because of a novel, *Mrs. Emsley* [sic], published by another Hector Munro. That book, however, was not published until 1911. Its final paragraph . . . would persuade the most casual skimmer that it was not the work of Saki: '"Ah, love!" she stretched out her arms toward him. "Love too is a wonderful experience. Like death itself, it brings forgiveness—when it has been purified by time and the wider life"'" (Notes, 328).

(Another possible Saki-related hoax is the entry, in H. E. Gerber's and Philip Armato's list of abstracts for recent works of Saki criticism in *ELT* 11.1 [1968], for an edition of Munro's foreign correspondence — "likely to add upwards of 600 items to the Munro canon. In addition . . . [the editor] is uncovering a large body of uncollected material" — by a Ph.D. student at the University of Pennsylvania. It is not surprising that no record of the completed project exists, since the student's name is "Carl Nathan Jester.")

At some point in 1900, Munro decided upon "Saki," from the hugely popular *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*, a translation of the eleventh-century Persian poet's quatrain epic by Edward FitzGerald that first appeared in 1859; Langguth discovered lines from the *Rubáiyát* copied out in Munro's commonplace book (61).[17] In the Sufi poem, the bearer of the cup of life is a "Saki," also referred to as "my Belovéd" (line 81) or the "Eternal Sákí" (183). FitzGerald's fourth edition of the poem ends: "And when like her, oh Sákí, you shall pass / Among the Guests Star-scattered on the Grass, / And in your joyous errand reach the spot / Where I made One—turn down an empty Glass!" (401-4) A "Saki", also transliterated as "Saaqi" or "Saqi," is a wine-serving boy, a symbol of the Beloved or spiritual master in Sufi poetry. This cupbearer, a spiritual guide, is one of those friends "of God who pour the sweet nectar of God's love into the mouths of people and with their intoxicating and divine message and sayings kindle the flame of fervour and divine love in their hearts."[18] There is some irony to Munro's alter ego taking his name from religious verse, for the prose-writing Saki often attacks religion in his satires. Yet for an author-narrator who often alluded to nature gods of Greek myth and eroticized ephebes in his work, the title of a wine-bearing boy who conveys the nectar and ambrosia of love to others is quite fitting and, as Carey points out, the poem's suggestion to Saki that he "meet death unflinchingly" suggests Munro's eventual co-opting of Saki to announce his manly patriotism at the dawn of World War I (xiv). Then, too, Saki is but a designation, and not a proper name, so Saki remains pseudonymous yet still anonymous

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[17] In his writings, Saki often returns to the poem from which Munro's literary persona springs — see Chapter 4.

[18] <http://www.islamic-studies.org/philosophy6.htm>. Accessed December 6, 2003.

(and largely andronymous, for Saki is never clearly gendered in the *Rubáiyát*[19]). While his publishers connected Saki with Munro, Saki satirized Munro's milieu and, as Room notes, an exotic-sounding name taken from a text in translation widens the gap between satirizer and satirized: "there have been occasions when some writers have assumed a foreign name with the aim of describing their impressions of their own country apparently through the eyes of an alien observer" (8-9). A pseudonymous satirist, too, was common: "critics and satirists of all ages have adopted a disguised name, from d'Aubigné in the seventeenth century to the wry American humorist Mr. Dooley (real name Finley Peter Dunne) in the twentieth. It is understandable, too, that not just critics and humanists but political activists and revolutionaries will wish to adopt a 'cover' name, since the publishing of their ideology in printed form will be one of the most effective ways of disseminating their message. Escaping the watchful eye of the censor here is all-important" (Room 26). As the author-narrator who pens bubbling, witty stories and sketches that are to be taken in by readers who live in the world he is mocking, Saki is very much the conveyer of a message, or an intermediary between the God-like text and imaginative world therein, and the people consuming the words on the page. What "Saki" is not is God himself; as if in anticipation of the deconstructionists' killing of the "'Author-God' . . . [where] the liberation of the text from its author is to reiterate the liberation of the world from God" (Burke 23-24), the authorial persona of Saki is named after the role of an intermediary between God and humans, as taken from a non-Christian, non-English text.

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[19] Whether one sees "Saki" as andronymous or as the sort of young boy eroticised in some of Saki's stories, the suggestion given by such a pseudonym is that, as Room notes in relation to Scot author William Sharp (a.k.a. Fiona Macleod), "perhaps there was also a genuine femininity in the writing or the personality of the man himself that motivated this particular choice of name" (31).

Saki's pseudonym is also an alternative identity, an authorial persona. I use "persona" advisedly, as the Munro who comes down to us through others' recollections is a constructed persona as well, but Saki is a largely univocal (at least until 1913) persona existing, expressed, and known solely through his writing. While critics have distinguished between the "narrative 'I'" and author using the term "persona" (Elliott 4), the third-person voice[20] in Saki's fiction is so consistent and ironically removed from the narrative that it is effectually Saki himself, as Simon Stern argues.[21] Saki the author-narrator, then, is a persona or "complete [mask] of the self" (8), but also a persona in the definitive senses of being "an aspect of [Munro's] personality as shown to or perceived by others" and "a character assumed by an author . . . in his or her writing" ("Persona," def. 1, 2). As author and narrator, Saki is simultaneously creator and character, both a persona of Munro (who is himself a textually constructed persona) and the persona who frames and tells the stories. Saki is the satirist, while the displaced, distant Munro is part of the world being satirized. It is important to remember, then, that Munro is not necessarily part of Saki or vice versa; nor is the man more or less important than the satirist. Saki may be a voluble aspect of Munro's personality, or a separate self, or Saki may be just a "mask necessarily representing the opposite of the true self of the writer, or at least a self highly remote from his actual character" (Elliott 32). Yet at times, "instead of the mask as a bogus front, hiding the real person behind it . . . the mask mediates the highest reality of all" (21) — that is, Saki, the cupbearer of satire, may be expressing the true dissent that seethed within Munro, or he may be countering or revising Munro's positions or other personas.

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[20] Two of the rare times that a first-person narrator is used by Saki is in "The Soul of Laploshka" and in his first Reginald sketch/story, "Reginald," which appeared in *The Westminster Gazette* on September 28, 1901, in the midst of his run of "Westminster Alice" parodies. The tale begins: "I did it—I should have known better. I persuaded Reginald to go to the McKillops' garden-party against his will" (5).

[21] The consistent, distinctive voice of his texts characterize and delineate the persona of Saki, and is an aspect of the Ancient Roman notion of "persona," as defined by Cicero: "distinction and dignity (as in a style of writing)" (Elliott 27, quoting Gordon W. Allport, *Personality: A Psychological Interpretation*, 1937, p. 26).

In Roland Barthes' "The Death of the Author," the semiotician writes of ways in which authors have tried to subvert their own importance by asserting the primacy of language over its creator, distancing themselves from the text they write; Munro, however, tried to subvert notions of authorship by establishing an authorial pseudonym and persona, Saki, who distanced himself from Munro in order to satirize his world. "Saki," removed from Munro, had his own body of work, distinct from the writings produced by those versions of "H. H. Munro" under the rubric of Hector Hugh Munro (see Appendix Five for a schematic of the man's writing personas). As explained below, "Saki" became the author of fiction and plays, while "H. H. Munro" or some variant thereof was the writer of ephemeral articles; thus Saki was taken as "a different name not [only] in order to distinguish between the writing self and the professional self, but [also] to differentiate between one aspect of his . . . writing and another" (Room 23). The distinction between Munro's articles, intended for brief consumption in a paper, and Saki's stories, which transcended the here-and-now and would be collected and anthologized, is the difference between Munro as writer and Saki as author. But then a writer, too, is a living being, while Saki existed only in his texts: "An author is born after a work is published, while a writer actually writes one. 'The writer' refers to a biological body (corpus), while 'the author' signifies primarily a textual one. The writer is born, in some way educated, at one point takes pen in hand, and eventually dies. The author comes after the work is produced by its readers, and lives on in the words written and spoken about it" (Kropf 61). In the inextricable link between "Saki" and his work, the usual relationship of an author to his writing is further upset by the clearly delineating pseudonym, for "Saki," unlike Munro, existed only in relation to, for, and because of his texts. Ginsburg explains, "A pseudonym always subverts, or inverts, the relationship between an author and his work. It creates a situation in which it is not a certain reality (personal, biographical, social) which creates a fiction (a novel) but the opposite: it is the fiction which creates the reality" (543). In a Barthian sense, then, particularly because of the Munro – Saki gap, Saki does not so much write his texts, as the texts produce and perpetuate Saki. If, as Michel Foucault argues in "What Is An Author?", "a text apparently points to this figure [of the author] who is outside and precedes it" (139), a pseudonym associates the text exclusively with the authorial persona, rather than the "real writer" behind that persona.[22] In this way, an analysis of Saki's stories is an examination of Saki and his relationship to the subverted Munro.

Yet Munro's adoption of the pseudonym Saki complicates the issue of authorship. Whereas Munro once existed in "real life," that is, some sort of objective, historical reality between the years 1870 and 1916, "Saki" arises entirely from the stories, plays, and novels he wrote. The narrative voice and author of those works is Saki, and unlike Munro, he exists in the limitless imaginative space of those texts; indeed, like any other pseudonymous author, the persona Saki's "truth and very existence are but a product of the text" (Ginsburg 556). Although Saki has been consistently confused with Munro, in fact Saki is *only* the author and narrative voice of his fiction; he consists entirely, that is, "of [the] textual material" (Kropf 2) that he produced. Yet, Kropf continues, "The distinction between a writer as the actual creator of a text and an author as a semiotic entity constituted by society raises the following question: Would it be possible for a writer to subvert the workings of the institution of authorship and thereby write and publish in freedom from the socioliterary process that conflate life and work?" (2) Munro attempted to subvert standard notions of authorship by establishing a pseudonym that served, in its distinctive narrative voice, style, and name, as an authorial persona. Yet "Saki" not only dissociates himself from the "socioliterary process" that would conflate the life of the private Munro with the work of Saki, but the author-narrator Saki satirizes the urban bourgeois world which the gentleman, journalist, and soldier Munro inhabited, addressed in his articles, and fought for.

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[22] Foucault explains how "the link between a proper name and the individual being named and the link between an author's name and that which it names are not isomorphous and do not function in the same way" (141), but he ignores the attempt of pseudonymous writing to establish and acknowledge this breach. As Munro himself no doubt intended upon adopting the pseudonym, "Saki" is clearly not "isomorphous" with or indistinguishable from H. H. Munro, but readers, critics, and biographers have continued to err in their various conflations, suppositional links, and overlapping of the two.

This marked separation between Munro and Saki is an obvious gulf that, curiously, no biographer or critic has attempted to bridge or chart (only Stern and Christopher Lane have acknowledged and briefly examined this difference, though they also confuse Munro and Saki in their studies). In fact, most literary studies have furthered the confusion of Saki with Munro that Ethel Munro initiated with her 1924 memoir of her brother, "Biography of Saki." Neither Gillen's nor Langguth's biography clearly distinguishes between the two main personas: Munro the Edwardian gentleman, who exists in fragmentary recollections of relatives and contemporaries, but mostly in his journalistic writing and the few remaining documents signed "H. H. Munro," and Saki the authorial persona, who wrote and narrated — in his telltale sardonic voice and satirical style — about 1000 pages of drama and fiction. W. R. Spikesman confuses

Hector with his authorial persona throughout his recollection of "a man . . . whom I loved for his being just 'Saki'" ("Biography" 714); Ethel's biography was published under the title "Biography of Saki," not "Hector Hugh Munro." *The Dictionary of National Biography* has an entry for Munro, while most other literary biography reference books offer information on "Saki." All critics (with the exception of a few references in Gillen's biography), perhaps so carried away with the light but acerbic tone that dominates his fiction, allow Munro to be enveloped by or confused with his pseudonym.[23] Don Henry Otto, John Carey (who writes that Saki died in World War I, not Munro), and Sally Broadbent Palmer all muddle Munro and Saki. For instance, Joseph S. Salemi is both confusing and anachronistic when he ignores the fact that Hector Hugh Munro did not even have "Saki" as a persona until 1900, when he was 30, and writes instead that, regarding "Saki's obsessive interest in animals . . . he spent his childhood in Devonshire, in close contact with all sorts of pets and livestock" (424). D. Dean Loganbill sees Saki as a character created by Munro, rather than a narrative presence or persona. Langguth sees Hector the boy as writing the stories and Munro the man going off to war; the biographical subject that emerges is an amorphous Munro-Saki. Frost, in his dissertation, goes so far in blotting out Munro with Saki that he writes about *The Rise of the Russian Empire* (1900) as "Saki's first book" (17), even though there is no evidence that Munro used "Saki" privately as an alter ego before 1900, "Saki" first appeared in print in 1901, and the Russian history was published as being written by "Hector H. Munro." Simon

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[23] The gap between Munro and Saki is also revealed in the continued attempts by anthologists, critics, and biographers to reveal or create a new Munro or Saki. This is most obvious in Langguth's biography, which is clearly aiming, within an ordered narrative of Munro's life, to "out" Munro (understandably so, since his possible homosexuality and the queerness of his stories was ignored until then, save for Drake's brief raising of the theory in his 1962 *English Fiction in Transition* article) as a gay writer. In his study, and confusion, of Munro's life and Saki's writing, however, Langguth never cites or in any way acknowledges Gillen's 1969 biography. Such a refusal to argue with or simply address a previous biography implicitly establishes Langguth's book as the only interpretation and definitive approximation of Munro/Saki.

Stern, in "Saki's Attitude," which focusses on Munro's pseudonym "in order to emphasize the detachment that was essential to his authorial stance" (291), assumes that Saki is speaking "disdainfully" even in "An Old Love," a piece that was in fact written "under his real name in the *Morning Post*" (290; also Langguth 258-60) — thus Stern backwardly makes Munro a persona of Saki. Saki was, obviously, a pseudonym for Munro, but *both* the ("Hector H.," "H. H." and even Hector Hugh) Munro and Saki we think we "know" are nothing but personas faintly appearing in the mists of memory and history, vaguely formed by scattered bits of information, subjective recollections, or fictional writings.

From what little can be gleaned from various accounts — ranging narrowly from Ethel Munro's memoir to Munro's journalism or writing friends' reminiscences — the gap between Munro and Saki is obviously wide (even to biographers who don't tackle it[24]) but murky. The adult Munro was very private, exhibited a noted "indifference to money" (Lambert 36), and apparently dressed down, "careful to appear the model English gentleman" (Carey xiii). In London, the bachelor frequented the Cocoa Tree Club, played bridge (a game involving very little talking and thus no need to demonstrate wit), and worked on "tapestry painting" at home (a hobby whereby one makes the background of a painting appear to be faded weaving).[25] He did co-host a party for the

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[24] This gap may account for a "detachment" in Saki's works that some critics have noted. Lambert, in an introduction that constantly confuses Munro and Saki, comments: "a basic detachment informs all his best writing as well as what little is known of him as a man" (37). In an analysis of *The Chronicles of Clovis* that confuses Munro and Saki, Joseph S. Salemi discusses Saki's "curiously cold-blooded detachment" (429) without ever considering that the persona of Saki, distanced from the life and writings of Munro, might permit or create such detachment. Frost mentions Ethel's "brother's detachment and reserve" (*Saki: His Context and Development* 19). Saki's persistently ironic or sardonic tone, which I suspect is what Stern is alluding to (291), also adds to this sense of detachment in his writing.

[25] Langguth 192; Reynolds xx; Ethel Munro 691. From "Reginald in Russia" to "The East Wing," references to Munro's favoured card game abound; Langguth suggests that, given Munro's diffidence and

Russian Ballet in 1911[26] (Langguth 180-81; "Biography" 690), attended the Academy and the theatre even when on military leave ("Biography" 707), and had a small, upper-middle-class social circle (Langguth 181-82, 184-86). Yet Munro's presence at such events is only noteworthy because, ironically, it went unnoticed at the time, as J. W. Lambert explains: "This successful journalist and writer, habitué of clubs and drawing-rooms and country houses, of the theatre, the ballet and the Café Royal, is almost entirely unremarked in the memoirs of the period; people whom, it would seem, he could hardly have failed to meet frequently seem in fact never to have known him" (36). Cecil William Mercer even remarked on the great difference between the muted Munro and any of his characters or the witty narrator of his stories (Langguth 182). It may be that Munro was private because he felt isolated from the world which he satirized as Saki, and there is therefore in his stories "a strain . . . of loneliness and disenchantment" (Lambert 37). Yet a lack of trustworthy biographical material prevents us from ever knowing if Munro's privacy stemmed from a silent antipathy towards his social milieu, which he only voiced as Saki. Presumably Munro's experiences in London's artistic and upper-middle-class worlds informed his satires, but Ethel Munro breezily brushes aside such notions: "I have not touched upon his social life, visits to country-house parties, etc., because they would not be of interest to the general reader" (714). All in all, Munro seems the very antithesis of the witty, biting Saki and Saki's flamboyant, rebellious wits, such as Reginald and Clovis.

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sensitivity to "banality and pretension," bridge, "a game that allows one to sit for hours in the company of others and say next to nothing," would have provided a welcome "refuge" (90).

[26] Ethel Munro uncertainly states that the party took place in 1909, but Langguth maintains that the year was 1911.

The gap between Munro and Saki is most obvious, in fact, not in the breach between their private social and public socioliterary spheres, but in the difference between their writings and writing styles. While, technically, Munro himself had authorial sub-versions — the "Hector H. Munro" of *The Rise of the Russian Empire*, the "H. H. M." of "Dogged," and the "H. H. Munro" of the *Morning Post* and business letters to John Lane (see Appendix Three) — those personas are closer in both name and writing style to Munro (that is, the existing examples of the private writing style of Munro's correspondence to his sister Ethel) than to the fictional work of Saki. The reportorial writing of Munro, corresponding from Europe for the *Morning Post*, is observational, anecdotal, and sometimes florid prose, leavened occasionally with dry wit; pieces often meander or digress, and generalizations abound. Munro's business letters to John Lane concerning his publications were mostly brief, humourless notes about financial matters or the design and marketing of the books. In sharp contrast, Saki's punchy short fiction evinces a languid, sardonic, yet carefully constructed style.[27]

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[27] Jonathan Rose, in *The Edwardian Temperament, 1895-1919*, explains the confluence of economic and social forces that allowed humorous writers such as Saki to launch their careers in the newspaper world:

> The flowering of literary humor in Edwardian Britain was directly connected with the rapid expansion of one leisure industry in particular—journalism. Between 1881 and 1911 the newspaper-reading public increased fourfold; so did the number of journalists, authors, and editors, a faster rate of growth than any other major professional category. Most of these new career opportunities for writers were created by the rise of what was called the New Journalism, newspapers and magazines that placed a novel emphasis on lightness and entertainment. . . .
>
> The New Journalism created a demand for feuilletonists—writers who could produce, against a deadline, clever squibs on literature or politics. The demand called into existence a flock of Edwardian wits, who would have been far more solemn or far less successful if the New Journalism had not providentially materialized at the beginning of their literary careers. . . . Also in 1901 Saki [sic], after a false start as a serious historian, found his metier writing satires for the *Westminster Gazette*, then only eight years old . . . (166-67)

Saki was also building on a popular tradition: "Cleverness was a commodity very much in demand among Edwardian readers. There was an excellent market for fiction about impossibly 'smart' aristocrats, such as Anthony Hope's *Dolly Dialogues* (first published in the *Westminster Gazette* in 1893), E. F. Benson's best-selling *Dodo* (1893) and *Dodo the Second* (1913), the novels of Pearl Craigie [John Oliver Hobbes], and the stories of Saki" (170).

"H. H. Munro" regularly wrote reports as a correspondent for the *Morning Post* from September 1902 until 1908.[28] Munro's first story "Dogged," signed with his initials, was published in *St. Paul's* on February 18, 1899 (Langguth 52; see Appendix One), and Munro also published "The Blood-Feud of Toad-Water" in the January 26, 1901 edition of *The Westminster Gazette* under his initials (69); both stories are quite un-Saki-esque, with the former featuring a heterosexual kiss, never again seen in a Saki story (Langguth 53), and the latter being a Hardy-like rural tale of superstition, devoid of wit: "it had little in common with the work that would define his reputation" (Langguth 69-70). In-between these two stories, in 1900 Grant Richards published the product of three years of research in the British Museum Reading Room (52), *The Rise of the Russian Empire*, under the name of one "Hector H. Munro." "Saki" first appeared with his quickly popular *The Westminster Alice* political satires, which debuted in *The Westminster Gazette* on July 25, 1900.[29] But Langguth notes that while "the new Alice adventures were unfolding in *The Westminster Gazette*, Hector was experimenting with other styles" (69). According to the biographer, Munro's writing in the commonplace book at the time was "either sententious or in pursuit of a style . . . Hector had not found his voice, nor did his use of Saki on the Alice parodies indicate a firm decision about which name to use when he met his true public" (69).

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[28] Perhaps to ally himself with "H. H. Munro" the correspondent, new to the paper, "H. H. Munro" signed his name to a few parodies in the *Morning Post* that are drier, more reportorial, and not as funny as the parodies by "Saki" in *The Westminster Gazette*: "Crumbs from the Big Loaf" (some time in autumn 1903), "The Angel and his Lost Michael" (Nov. 16, 1903), "Spade-Work out of Monmouth" (Nov. 30, 1903), "A Jungle Story," a sequel to his *WG* Kipling political satires (Dec. 7, 1903), and "The Coming of Nicholas" (Dec. 21, 1903).

[29] Langguth suggests that Saki's first writing may have been, appropriately, the *Rubáiyát* parodies "The Quatrains of Uttar Al Ghibe, With Explanations and Conjectural Notes," which could have been penned in 1900, but were printed in *The Westminster Gazette* (March 4 and 9, 1901) midway through the Alice series (63-64).

In addition to all the short stories which first appeared in periodicals or were posthumously published under his name, Saki authored a three-part series of "Heart-To-Heart Talks" between artistic figures in *The Bystander* in 1912, a second, failed Alice series in 1913 for *The Bystander* and then the *Daily Express*, and, as a reporter-satirist confusion of Munro-Saki, parliamentary accounts for *The Outlook* in 1914. Yet Saki's satires of Tory and Liberal politicians, and his acid stories involving bourgeois dimwits and upper-class fools, appeared in the "Liberal *Westminster Gazette*" and *The Bystander*, "a popular upper-crust pictorial weekly" (Thrane[30] 139). Saki's stories mocking the middle and leisure classes originally appeared, then, in periodicals that catered to the growing newspaper-reading middle and leisure classes. And so Saki's short and smoothly written, easily digestible satirical tarts were meant to be consumed by the very subjects of his scathing criticism.

Thus Munro, the boy who grew up in late Victorian England and the gentleman bachelor who moved discreetly in early-1900s London social circles, depended on the façade of social and literary conventions of the Victorian and Edwardian worlds for the effect of his satires and parodies, while behind that façade Saki often undermined the accepted truths and foundations of those worlds. Indeed, in attacking Munro's milieu, Saki often attacks or rebuts Munro's earlier writing; the conservative attitudes in Munro's 1902-08 articles as a European correspondent are often complicated or even reversed in some of Saki's short fiction.[31] Yet while the demarcation between "H. H. Munro" or some signed version thereof and "Saki" is clear from 1901-1913, as the personas differ according to their writing forums, genres, approaches, concerns, and styles, the two selves collide and rupture with the publication of the unfunny, call-to-arms screed *When William Came* in late 1913. The personas further fracture once Munro enlists in August 1914 and writes pro-war letters such as "An Old Love" under his name, while Saki writes the articles for the *22nd Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers' Fortnightly Gazette* in 1915 (Langguth 260). Once critical of his bourgeois audience, Saki is co-opted by Munro to exhort the middle and upper classes, and encourage himself, in pro-war efforts. I will refer to the confusion of Munro and Saki as "Munro-Saki" and where it is unclear, during the time when they were distinct writing personas, if one is or if both — in dialogue with each other or in agreement — are speaking (i.e., Munro "and/or" Saki), I will use "Munro/Saki."

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[30] From the start of the article, Thrane wilfully confuses Munro and Saki — he writes, "I use the name Saki . . . for brevity" (139) — by not identifying the nature of the pieces that appeared in each periodical. Munro only wrote news items, observational reports, and a few light sketches as a foreign correspondent for the *Morning Post*, while Saki published satires and stories in the other papers.

[31] Peter Haining touches on the channelling of Munro the reporter's observations by Saki the wry satirist:

The differing personas of Hector Hugh Munro and "Saki," then, acted against and reacted to each other, ebbing and flowing and occasionally coming together, only to break apart again, until they are finally conflated by Munro in a jarring, anxious, and ruinous effort to bolster the soldier's manly contributions to imperial Britain's war effort. The aim of my thesis is to examine the gap between Saki the satirist and Munro, a man of his satirized world, by analyzing Saki's short fiction and, in so doing, reveal the ongoing dialogue between the two personas of Munro the Edwardian reporter, gentleman bachelor, and soldier, and Saki the author-narrator. The ambiguously dissident stylistic,

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Undoubtedly, though, his experiences as a journalist were profoundly changing his character – changes that H. W. Nevinson, a fellow journalist and later close friend, who was also in St. Petersburg at this time, noticed.

'One saw the twist of cynicism clearly marked on his face,' Nevinson wrote. 'His aspect of the world was cynical. But the cynicism was humorous and charming, partly assumed as a protective covering to conceal and shelter feeling. This is our English way, and in the suppression of emotion, or of its outward signs, Saki was entirely English.' (xii-xiii) thematic, and socio-historical tensions in Saki's stories — homosexuality is subtly valued over ultimately prevailing heterosexuality, anti-Semitism is often presented unironically but at other times satirized, and suffragettes are not always attacked but sometimes used to undermine the worse evils of upper- and middle-class pretenses — result from the radical separation of Munro the man and Saki the author-narrator. My analysis of Saki's fiction traces a constant "dialogue of ambivalence" between the gentleman Munro and the authorial persona Saki in, for instance, campy stories, fiction involving female protagonists, Slavic or Jewish figures, and moments of metafiction and self-reflection. These two selves and their preoccupations collide, overlap, blur, and ultimately collapse amid World War I, as the conformist, patriotic Munro co-opts and dilutes the anti-conventional, rebel persona of Saki. My study of Saki's short fiction suggests, then, that any satire or satirist beholden to the world or subject they are excoriating is necessarily riven and irretrievably trapped.

Of course, like any individual, Hector Hugh Munro no doubt had multiple facets and aspects of his personality that were expressed in different ways at various times throughout his life; as Munro himself wrote in his commonplace book, "Man was a being with myriad lives and myriad sensations, a complete multiform creature that bore within itself strange legacies of thought and passion" (Langguth 69). Munro's public self that Mercer noted, for instance, may well have been as much of a vicarious persona of the private Munro as Saki was and, as Lane notes, both Munro and Saki "project a composite of conflicting aims and identifications that resist cohesion" (214). As manifested in Munro's and Saki's writing, however, such conflicts and contradictions do not resist analysis. For the sake of my argument regarding Munro's and Saki's dialogue of ambivalence, and in order to contrast two basic personas (the Munro group of personas vs. the Saki persona; see Appendix Five) who can best be identified according to their patronyms — some variation of Munro or his initials, in contrast to "Saki" — I align the various literary sub-versions of Hector Hugh Munro under that rubric. Both Munro and Saki were no doubt not simple, essentialized, fixed, and stable identities, but ever-changing personas whose nuances and niceties I attempt to trace, to some extent, in my analysis of their writings. Yet no analysis can, ultimately, convey the lifelong complexities of anyone's personality. John Carey, in his introduction to a Saki anthology, rightly notes: "Accounts of Saki simplify him because they separate out the components of a personality—rebellious and conformist, romantic and conscience-stricken, escapist and vengeful, flippant, boyish, adult—which in life made up a single, complicated being" (xxiv). Yet just as Carey often resorts to binary opposites, so Munro established (but later removed and replanted) two poles of his personality — Munro and Saki — between which such dissident tensions and paradoxes as Carey outlines can often be explored and contextualized. This dissertation examines and conveys the various complexities of the person within the parameters set by (and the later blurring between) the two seemingly separate and still, no doubt, simplified personas of Munro and Saki.

Particularly because Hector Hugh Munro adopted the authorial persona of Saki from 1901 on for his short fiction and novels, and kept that persona carefully separate from his journalistic and (what little is known of) his private correspondence, Saki's fiction must be seen as not just an antibiography of Hector Hugh Munro, where the gaps and secrets in Munro's life can be teased out in an analysis of Saki's writings. Rather, my study of an ambivalent dialogue between Munro the man and Saki the author-narrator will expose many hidden tensions between the two personas of Munro and Saki, and serve as a crucial tracing, through literary analysis, of the ever-fluctuating, tense dynamic between a "real" man who remains largely unknown, and his connected yet often oppositional authorial persona. For while Saki is a dominant but hidden presence in the short stories as a narrator-hero figure, he is a narrator-hero in the attacks on a world that raised Hector Hugh Munro. The stories of Saki pit themselves against the pedestrian life and social foundation of Munro's upper-middle class world. Writing from within the dominant order, Saki's form of satirical rebellion is what I term "dependent dissidence," similar to Dollimore's notion of "transgressive reinscription," which in turn is influenced, as outlined in *Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault*, by "Richard Sennett's theory of 'disobedient dependence'. Transgression, says Sennett, is perhaps the most forceful element in disobedient dependence, since it involves a defiance based on dependence, a rebellion not against authority but within it" (Dollimore 82-83). Dollimore focusses on Wilde's inversion of binaries, usually through aphorism, as his particular form of "transgressive reinscription" (33) — an unstable rebellion against the dominant order that arises from the dominant order's containment of subversive forces, only to exceed that tolerance and, by rewriting dominant norms, question and destabilize the dominant order. Saki's rebellion against the dominant, however, is different[32] in that it involves a split between two personas — Munro and Saki — and thus a curious inversion of their roles within Saki's satires: the author-narrator becomes most important in his writings, while the Edwardian gentleman and his world are mocked. But Saki's rebellion is also dependent upon the Edwardian upper-middle-class world in which Munro lived, prospered, and published; Saki is a dissident voice in the very world on which Munro depends. Thus Saki's dependent dissidence is the subversion and mockery from within of an elite Edwardian world which produced Munro and Saki's characters; Saki, too, being the alter ego of Munro, is reliant, by proxy, on the very world he mocks. Munro and Saki are pitted against one another while informing each other. Because of this push-and-pull between Munro and Saki, Saki's rebellious stories are not always clear-cut subversions of white, heterosexual male English society, as Wilde's work usually is. Saki's darkly and wildly imaginative stories are mainly, until 1913, constant subversions of the routine, conventional Edwardian world, and thus act consistently as a "perverse, transgressive reordering of fantasy's conventional opposite, the mundane" (324). As war approached, however, and the patriotic personal sentiments of Munro clashed with the subversive dandy wit of Saki, the personas overlapped, then merged, until Saki's dependently dissident satire of Munro's world failed, fizzling into an intermittently rebellious but increasingly conventional and wholly dependent, non-dissident view of Edwardian society.

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[32] Wilde's "transgressive" homosexuality, which resulted in his infamous trial and imprisonment, is incorporated by Dollimore for the purposes of showing the "perverse dynamic" that fuelled Wilde's extensive subverting, re-proximating, and questioning of the dominant values of his time through both his social displays of wit and his writing. The private Munro's possible homosexuality seems to have been hidden from all but the closest of friends and Saki's work does not thrive on constant aphorisms, paradoxes, and ironies as much as Wilde's stories (though pithy, scathing witticisms do play an important role in Saki's writing, particularly his early, Reginald- and Clovis-centred stories) and, especially, essays and plays (Saki wrote no literary essays), from which Dollimore takes many examples of Wilde's "transgressive" witticisms.

Such dependent dissidence is why Reginald and other Saki protagonists seem to critics to be "hopeless hero[es]" (Otto 211) in stories which "deconstruct the society and families from which its characters emerge, yet upon which they are intimately dependent" (Palmer 197) and accounts for what Carey notes is the paradox of "Saki's fiction, namely, the strict limits within which its rebelliousness operates" (xiii). Saki's reliant, and ultimately ambiguous, dissent makes it seem, as Adam Frost states, that there is “no mission and no message” in Saki’s work (“Review” 447). For how can a struggle by Clovis, Vera, and others, against the very bourgeois, aunt-dominated world in which Munro grew up and the upper-class London world of pretense in which Munro quietly moved, ever be incontestably won? Saki’s stories are documents of temporary triumphs in an ongoing and ultimately futile struggle against a world to which, after the story ends, Munro returned while Saki disappears.

While Otto, Palmer, and Charles Gillen recognize the dependence of Saki’s characters on the society and families they rebel against, no critic has heretofore examined the Munro/Saki persona split. Early critics of Saki — particularly Otto, Robert Drake, and Peter Bilton — have even tried to show that Saki’s satire is moral, prescriptive, or corrective. In fact, Saki’s short stories anatomize and criticize Munro’s society, and are ultimately personal, because they are borne of this ambivalent tension, which can be seen through the prism of Saki’s dependently dissident stories. Thus Saki’s short fiction is much more than just a reaction to the “burden of childhood” (Graham Greene vii) or a series of vicarious acts of revenge against the aunts who raised Munro, as critics such as Graham Greene and Langguth (223) largely contend. Saki is more than just a suspected, closeted gay writer whose campiness alludes to Munro’s possible homosexuality, as Langguth proposes.

The short fiction of Saki does not reveal the variously conjectured aspects of Hector the boy, or H. H. Munro the reporter, or Munro the soldier that other biographies have tried to show. First and foremost, the stories of Saki obliquely disclose — by way of constant contradistinction with what little is known of Munro — all the tensions, contradictions, and ambivalences (surrounding sexuality, suffragettism, anti-Semitism, Empire, Tory politics, and class) of a figure who split himself in two: Saki the authorial persona and narrator-hero of his own rebellions against Hector Hugh Munro the Edwardian gentleman bachelor.

I argue that the key to the initial separation of Munro/Saki and later blurring of Munro-Saki is masculinity. The early years of the Edwardian era saw the failures of the Boer War, leading Britons to express an increasing concern with the potency of their male soldiers. Munro, a boy raised in a rigidly patriarchal late-Victorian culture by strong-willed aunts, was later sent to the imperial training-ground Bedford Grammar School by his father, a British officer in the Burma Police. This confusion of an imperial masculinity with domineering mother-figures likely led to an increasing conflict between notions of manliness and effeminacy in Munro, whom Langguth and others suggest was gay; certainly, Saki's stories endorse unorthodox male sexualities. As I explore in this dissertation, Munro's and Saki's vacillating attitudes towards unorthodox sexualities, women, and Jews and Slavs are precariously balanced expressions and displacements of the simultaneous embrace and rejection by Munro/Saki of a desired manly Self and an effeminate, outsider Other. Munro likely saw himself as both imperial, accepted Self and socially unacceptable Other; the literary persona of Saki was a distancing from the Edwardian man Munro and a counter-cultural critic of Munro's world. In this way, socially contradictory and conflicting aspects, ideas, and values were expressed and contained by the personas of Munro and Saki, revealing how, as Dollimore notes, the "terms of a binary interrelate, interdepend" (229).

The split of Munro/Saki exemplifies Dollimore's sense of a "perverse dynamic" whereby oppositional ideas co-exist because of "certain instabilities and contradictions within dominant structures which exist by virtue of exactly what those structures simultaneously contain and exclude" (33); for instance, in Munro's childhood, the mixed messages of patriarchal aunts and homosocial boarding-schools. Munro-Saki's eventual expression of his masculine anxiety through denunciations of suffragettes and betrayals of dandy and Jewish figures whom he had often championed in his earlier fiction can be seen as "displacements which constitute certain repressive discriminations [and] are partly enabled via a proximity which, though disavowed, remains to enable a perverse return, an undoing, a transformation" (33). Hector Hugh Munro tried to contain, by parceling himself into personas, that "perverse dynamic [which] signifies that fearful interconnectedness whereby the antithetical inheres within, and is partly produced by, what it opposes. . . . the proximate is often constructed as the other, and in a process which facilitates displacement" (33). The satirical, convention-defeating author-narrator Saki is able, until 1913, to show the triumph of the unorthodox outsider against the very society that helped to latently foster a sense of difference and strangeness in so many men of the time. Such "transgressive reinscription . . . may be regarded as the return of the repressed and/or the suppressed and/or the displaced via the proximate. If the perverse dynamic generates internal instabilities within repressive norms, reinscription denotes an anti-essentialist, transgressive agency which might intensify those instabilities, turning them against the norms" (33). Yet as World War I approached, the Munro/Saki split breaks down when an increasingly militant, anti-dandy, anti-suffragette, and anti-Semitic Munro co-opts Saki in his increasingly anxious effort to voice a patriotic hyper-masculinity. Saki's dissidence — in his subversive celebrations of unorthodox male sexuality, independent women, and non-English outsiders — was always linked to Munro's fearful dependence and eventual militant conformity to heterosexual, white, imperial masculine Edwardian society. But while Munro/Saki were usually separated selves and even, at times, opposing binaries, by 1913, a Munro-co-opted Saki had blurred the selves and dissolved the binary oppositions when the Edwardian gentleman Munro was conquered by the world Saki so viciously mocked in his fiction. With Munro-Saki, the writing style changes, Saki's outsider figures are attacked, and Munro moves Saki into the world of war propaganda.

This dissertation will trace, then, the dialogue of ambivalence between these two personas, the savage satirist Saki (as seen in his dependently dissident short fiction) and the refined Edwardian gentleman Munro (as seen in his existing private correspondence, his journalism, and his writings as an enlisted soldier). In Chapter 1, "'A furtive sinister "something"': Saki and Camp," I examine Saki's distinctive camp sensibility, which moves the nineteenth-century, Wildean tradition of urbane, drawing-room wits into a dark, macabre wilderness, in order to subvert and oppose heterosexual society. In the shadow of the scandalous Wilde trials, in an awkward historic limbo between the "queer moment" (Sinfield) of Wilde's sodomy trial and the lessened public resistance to a homosexual identity after the war, Saki daringly alludes to Wilde's writings with his eroticized young men while coyly suggesting Munro's unorthodox masculinity through acts of startling, homoerotic violence or arch, campy scenes, as in "'Gabriel-Ernest,' the story of a boy werewolf whose appetite is too savage to be described or even witnessed by any other character" (Stern 284). As Sally Broadbent Palmer briefly explicates, Saki's protagonists, in rebelling against and subverting Victorian-era aunts, are reacting against Victorian family and imperial values, as when Van Cheele's "aunt–Victorian religion and heterosexual convention-bound society–has been overcome by the wily young man in her charge" (202). The early "Reginald" stories comprise a cheeky, homoeroticized revival of the dandy tradition, while some of his 1909-10 tales adopt then-current Pantheism, but mainly to mask their implicit valuing of non-heterosexuality over heterosexuality. The initially rebellious nature of Saki's camp, however, is eventually denied and reversed by the anxiously macho soldier Munro. Thus Saki's dependent dissidence manifests itself as campy rebellion that is anxiously retracted with the co-opting of Saki by dependent Munro and Munro-Saki's eager embrace of a military, patriotic masculinity.

In Chapter 2, "'The Threat': Anti-Auntness, Misogyny, and Anti-Suffragettism in Saki's Fiction," I examine the antipathy towards women of which critics accuse Saki and show how Saki's dislike is primarily directed at aunts, patriarchal subsitututes in Munro's childhood who are shown in Saki's literature as promoters of marriage, that reproducing, consolidating power structure of heterosexual society. Some of Saki's stories do not, in fact, exhibit the distance and aloofness from women that Munro the bachelor seemed to have shown. Yet Saki's appreciation for young, single women and occasional celebration of middle-aged women as protagonists is problematized by underlying links between women and the lower classes and between women and cats, links which suggest that women are inferior and even subhuman in Saki's world. Saki's deep opposition to the female suffrage movement in the stories reveals Munro's aunt-based resentment of women who are trying to change or somehow make themselves equal to the patriarchy; most important, Saki's nasty anti-suffragette stance reveals Munro's anxiety about his imperial manliness, an anxiety displaced into a vicious opposition to militant, organized ranks of women who are fighting the male establishment.

In Chapter 3, "'Cross Currents': Anti-Semitism, Slavic Europe and Imperial Britishness in Saki's Fiction," I show how Saki — influenced in part by the journalist Munro's gradual tempering of his anti-Semitic views — briefly attacks the roots of Edwardian anti-Jewish feeling in "The Unrest-Cure," only to be led by the anti-cosmopolitan, nationalist Munro's scapegoating of identifiably foreign Others into falling back on easy stereotyping. Saki's romanticization, a pseudo-"Orientalism," of Eastern Europe is sporadically complicated and undercut, though never deeply enough for Saki to entirely escape his initially established framing of Russia and the Balkans as authentically old, primal, wild frontiers. Thus Saki's dependent dissidence involves a brief, though significant, subversive satire of anti-Semitism surrounded by increasingly virulent anti-Semitism, and a perpetual vacillation between anti-Slavic sentiment and more complex portrayals of Russia and the Balkans.

In Chapter 4, "'The outcome of my imagination': Saki's Metafiction," I look at Saki's efforts to subvert and satirize his authorial persona and the central preoccupations of his fiction. The self-parodies of Saki, as in "The Stalled Ox" and "For the Duration of the War," are attempts to remove himself by another darting degree from the milieu of Munro and, by entering his hall-of-mirrors fictional world, slip away from his dependence on the middle- and upper-class Edwardian society in which he was raised and lived as Hector Hugh Munro.

Yet, as I explain in the conclusion, while Saki is the authorial "sub-version" (Kropf 229) of Munro and his world, the success of such divided self-parody and

-criticism is hobbled by Munro's destructive efforts to merge with and so co-opt Saki. As World War I approached, the vigorously patriotic Munro abandoned his private London world and, using Saki as a façade for conventional views rather than a separate, satirizing persona, rallied his countrymen and died for the very nationalistic, heteronormative, bourgeois Edwardian society which Saki had once so artfully questioned. The ambiguous dissent of the ever-changing Saki was ultimately quelled by the dependent, conformist Hector Hugh Munro. But if Munro, like Gabriel-Ernest, "'bravely sacrificed his life'" (*The Penguin Complete Saki* 69) at Beaumont-Hamel in 1916, unwitting readers and critics — who enthusiastically endorse Saki's savage wit without fully realizing its implications and complications — preserve the memory of the "'unknown boy'" (69), the author-narrator Saki who ate his young by satirizing the staid pretensions and routine self-delusions of Munro's world. Thus, in Saki's fiction, we see not only the savage satirist behind the façade of the Edwardian gentleman Munro, but the reader recognizes the raging, anti-conventional beast within that chafes against the restrictions of a blasé, mundane society on which we are so dependent.

Chapter 1

"A FURTIVE SINISTER 'SOMETHING'"
Saki and Camp

> And then nature is so indifferent, so unappreciative. Whenever I am walking in the park here, I always feel that I am no more to nature than the cattle that browse on the slope, or the burdock that blooms in the ditch.
>
> — Oscar Wilde, "The Decay of Lying: A Dialogue," 1889

> Of Pan and the elemental forces, the public has heard a little too much—they seem Victorian, while London is Georgian—and those who care for the earth with sincerity may wait long ere the pendulum swings back to her again. Certainly London fascinates. . . . as a heart that certainly beats, but with no pulsation of humanity. It lies beyond everything: Nature, with all her cruelty, comes nearer to us than do these crowds of men.
>
> — E. M. Forster, *Howards End*, 1910

> The condition of perfection is idleness : the aim of perfection is youth.
>
> — Oscar Wilde, "Phrases and Philosophies for the Use of the Young," 1894

In "Dogged," a story signed by "H. H. M." that appeared in *St. Paul's* on February 18, 1899, Artemus Gibbon receives a "wholly spontaneous kiss" (*Short Stories 2* 6) from an unnamed lady after she takes tea at his apartment. "This unsolicited kindness" (6) would be the only heterosexual kiss in a story penned by a persona of Hector Hugh Munro (Langguth 53). Fourteen years later, Saki denounces foppish, effeminate men who will not fight in his militant fantasy novel *When William Came* by dismissing the dandies of his earlier stories as degenerate slackers (*The Penguin Complete Saki* 701) who are part of England's "acquiescent spirit" (702); Murrey Yeovil even calls one such figure an "abhorrent specimen of male humanity" (764). In 1915, in "An Old Love" (*MP*, April 23, 1915), the soldier Munro condemns dandy-like men who "talk by the hour about chamber-music, Greek folk-dances, Florentine art, and the difficulty of getting genuine old oak furniture" (207) as a "variant from the red-blooded type" (206-07) and non-men who "belong to no sex" (207).

These gestures towards heterosexual masculinity appear strangely token when compared with many of the Saki stories which "Dogged" and "An Old Love" bookend. Such occasional manly posturing bubbles out of a turbulent mix of ambivalence, repression, a public writer's attempted rejection of a (probable) private homosexuality, and the conflicted sexual dissidence of a man who was also beholden to many of the patriotic, macho norms of an Edwardian England on the verge of war. From his beginnings in 1900 (as a satirist who viciously attacked the incumbent Tory government's mistakes in the Boer War) to 1913 and the approach of war, which saw a confusion of witty, detached Saki and serious, staunchly militant patriot Munro (not long after Saki's first novel, about the dandy Comus Bassington), Saki offers a sly, dissenting opposition to Edwardian heterosexual values. This rebellion, which implicitly values an unorthodox male homosexuality over heterosexual marriage, is at once the satirist's most dissident and most self-negated (and selves-opposing) theme, and is epitomized by "Gabriel-Ernest" (later collected in the 1910 volume *Reginald in Russia*), a story which, in fact, serves as both a final gesture to and a marked departure from the influences of a writer predominantly associated with scandal and depravity in Edwardian times.

FIN-DE-SIÈCLE DANDYISM AND THE WILDE TRIALS

Saki's fiction first appeared at a time when popular notions and categorizations of unorthodox male sexualities were in flux. Critics such as Michel Foucault and Alan Sinfield have argued that there was a cultural shift in the Victorian age from socially acceptable, non-sexual dandyism to a transgressive sexual desire between men that was variously studied, classified, and marginalized before and after homosexuality was legally and morally condemned at Oscar Wilde's infamous trials (which began with the writer's charge that the Marquess of Queensberry had libelled him when he addressed a letter "For Oscar Wilde posing somdomite"[33]). But English dandyism as the Victorians came to recognize it and "as we know it was invented at the beginning of the nineteenth century" by one man, during the Regency period (Robins 69). Dandyism as a "conscious pose" communicating an "affected aesthetic philosophy of rebellion and leisure" (3) was personified by George Bryan "Beau" Brummell (1778-1840) — "In fact, Brummell was the originator of that exclusive wit and provocative frivolity which we tend to think of today as inimitably Wildean" (Booth 26) — a self-made gentleman, regular London club man, and eventual gambler, best known for his cutting remarks and audacious social conversations (Moers 24-29). Nicknamed "Beau" for his dress, said to be gaudy, frilly, and overstylized (31), Beau Brummell essentially pioneered the identity of the dandy, a flamboyantly dressed, supremely leisured upper-middle-class or aristocratic man who "[stood] on an isolated pedestal of self" (17) and whose refined look and style "comprised shadings of sensitivity, delicacy, exclusivism, and effeminacy" (20). Booth notes, "Nowhere does dandyism's campiness come across better than in the Silver Fork novels [written by Brummell's followers]; it was these novels of dialogue and decor that Oscar Wilde was avowedly trying to revive with *The Picture of Dorian Gray*" (26).

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[33] The exact wording of this infamous note is unclear. According to Holland and Hart-Davis (Footnote 1, 634), the message on Lord Queensberry's card, left with the porter of the Albermarle Club on February 18, 1895, read, "To Oscar Wilde posing as a somdomite," but Robert Ross, who received a February 28 letter from Wilde about the incident, noted that "I cannot find Queensberry's original card, but the enclosed was Wilde's letter telling me of it" (Footnote 2, 634). In another book by Hyde and even another by Holland (*The Wilde Album*), the authors quote the message as: "For Oscar Wilde posing somdomite."

Saki's first novel, *The Unbearable Bassington* (1912), is in this tradition and noted as a Silver Fork novel by Booth (122).

Yet the dandy — effete, idle, witty, and faintly immoral — remained a figure that, at least until Wilde's trial, as Meyer argues in "Under the Sign of Wilde: An archaeology of posing," could remain an acceptably effeminate male figure. For instance, Wilde's Algernon Montcrieff and Jack Worthing banter with a very witty and often archly meaningful playfulness that suggests an "earnest" male love which can't be confused with a social or sexual identity of them as "homosexual" because the pair are gentlemen philanderers who find the female loves of their lives by the conventionally comedic end of *The Importance of Being Earnest* (not unlike the love of Antonio for Bassanio in *The Merchant of Venice*, an affection eclipsed by Bassanio's marriage to Portia). After the trials, however, such relationships would be read differently (and not necessarily anachronistically, for Wilde may have meant the Montcrieff-Worthing relationship to be homoerotic or even suggest bisexuality, though Wilde would not have thought of their sexuality in those terms) for, as Meyer notes, the court proceedings "appear to be the pivotal, historical moment that provided the major impetus for the recognition of a homosexual social identity by the nongay public and the adoption of that identity by homosexuals themselves" (95). Sinfield argues that dandyism became associated with sodomy and the "queer" only with Wilde's 1895 trials (122).[34] In effect, Wilde "transformed dandyism into a vehicle for a homoerotic presence and a sexualized symbol of the Decadence, marking his version as radically different from those of the past" (Meyer 77). A medico-legal definition connoting deviance and sin was applied to a figure that had previously been associated with culture, decadence, and wit. Sinfield argues that the dandy had been seen as heterosexual up until Wilde's trials not just because he was often a heterosexual philanderer, but because his outlandishness and flamboyance were culturally accepted as an expression of effeminate masculinity (69-71). With the Wilde trials, effeminacy became associated with perversion, deviance, and sodomy; before the Victorian era, male-male sex was seen as sodomy, a sinful act which "was never conceived of as the antithesis of any normative sexual standard," but in the 1880s the religious category of "sodomy" was cemented, under the "Criminal Law Amendment Act," as the sexual, social, and legal crime of "'gross indecency with another male person'" (Cohen, "Legislating the Norm" 171). The details of Wilde's sexual activities with young men, combined with sexological literature that was trying to define homosexuality in psychological and medical terms, and "Wilde's experiments [since 1883] to produce an embodied homoeroticism [which] had yielded a sophisticated and ambitiously far-ranging system of signifying practices that included dress, speech, gesture, and even a mode of text production" led to "the State's establishment of the homosexual social identity" (Meyer 97) and under the new "gross indecency" statute, Wilde was convicted and given a sentence of two year's hard labour (Cohen, "Legislating the Norm" 171).

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[34] See Hyde's *The Trials of Oscar Wilde* for a full account of the proceedings; a "medico-legal" discussion of homosexuality and the history of homosexuality in England is offered in an appendix.

The legal and medical establishments in the Victorian fin de siècle thus began to label and announce a sexuality that British society had for so long tried to suppress or ignore, associating the demonized sexual act of sodomy with the deviant social identity of a homosexual.[35] Foucault, in *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, outlines the movement of homosexuality as a subject of study from courts of law to scientific circles:

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[35] Of course, though the most convenient term, the very identity "homosexual," as should be clear from this brief history of the categorization and study of individuals who express same-sex desire, is fraught with

> As defined by the ancient civil or canonical codes, sodomy was a category of forbidden acts; their perpetrator was nothing more than the juridical subject of them. The nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form, and a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology. Nothing that went into his total composition was unaffected by his sexuality. It was everywhere present in him: at the root of all his actions because it was their insidious and indefinitely active principle; written immodestly on his face and body because it was a secret that always gave itself away. It was consubstantial with him, less as a habitual sin than as a singular nature. We must not forget that the psychological, psychiatric, medical category of homosexuality was constituted from the moment it was characterized—Westphal's famous article of 1870 on 'contrary sexual sensations' can stand as its date of birth—less by a type of sexual relations than by a certain quality of sexual sensibility, a certain way of inverting the masculine and the feminine in oneself. Homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphrodism of the soul. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species. (43)

The irony of many Victorian legislators', demagogues', and moral watchdogs' attempts to ward off the scourge of homosexuality was that, as Foucault explains, "The nineteenth century and our own have been rather the age of multiplication: a dispersion of sexualities, a strengthening of their disparate forms, a multiple implantation of 'perversions.' Our epoch has initiated sexual heterogeneities" (37). From 1898 to 1908, one critic gauged "that over one thousand [theoretical, not fictional] books were written about (predominantly male) homosexuality" (Lane 8). One of the works that ushered in this flurry of male homosexual studies, Havelock Ellis' *Sexual Inversion* (1897), voices the fear that English homosexuality has somehow increased with the Wilde case and thus, "while ostensibly attempting to deny the validity of [this] contention . . . Ellis's text paraleptically portrays Wilde as the example that defines the phenomenon and thereby

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complications and this problematic label only simplifies the often fluid, wide-ranging sexual preferences of a human being and reduces a person to his or her sexual preferences or acts.

represents him as a paradigmatic case of the very category" of male homosexuality, only confirming what the reports of the Wilde trials had already done, which was to solidify "the concept of 'homosexuality' in the Victorian sexual imagination around his excessively unique, highly visible, male person(a)" (Cohen, "Legislating the Norm" 170).

SAKI'S POST-WILDE CAMP

In the first decade of the nineteenth century, then, the dependently dissident, narrator-author persona of Saki — who, like Wilde, was "angered and bored" by conformity and "lived in terms of the discrepancy between his 'public' and 'private' selves" (Dollimore 310) — stepped into a post-Wildean, "queer limbo" breach, and introduced an altogether darker, nastier strain of camp. Camp, Booth notes, is a "stylised effeminacy" (18) and it appears, judging by dictionary entries, that the word, at least as an adjective, would have carried a similar meaning in Saki's day: "Ware's dictionary of *Passing English of the Victorian Era*, published in 1909, says this of camp: 'actions and gestures of an exaggerated emphasis. Probably from the French [perhaps *se camper*]. Used chiefly of persons of exceptional want of character, e.g., "How very camp he is"'" (30). *The Oxford English Dictionary* [*OED*] offers the same citation as the first textual appearance of "camp" in that sense. Now culturally associated with a humorous, gay aesthetic (exhibited most clearly in TV and film, from the 1960s *Batman* series and *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* to *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* and Pedro Almodóvar's films), camp originally developed along with dandyism as an aesthetic of coy affectedness or affectation, a playful wink and nod at a usually serious topic, and "a self-mocking abdication of any pretensions to power" (30). Such exaggerated fun and mock-seriousness is a type of satire of "straight"-laced social pretensions. Difficult to pin down, camp is a

> matter of parody; as such, it borrows much of its form from the object of its parody. Chameleon-like, the camp person takes on the colours of the society that supports him—except that they are not quite the same colours, being tinged with a particular irony. In a society that is silly, lewd and affected, you find the camp person: mock silly, mock lewd and mock affected. Camp is not frivolity itself but a certain malformation of frivolity. (42)

Camp, then, is a cheery, gay type of dissidence that is wholly dependent on the very markers, signs, and cultural references of the society which camp at once takes seriously and has fun with. Camp pushes a situation to or depicts a scene at the brink of parody, keeping the deadly serious and lively comic in balanced, codependent suspension (picture opposite looking-glasses which mirror each other's reflections). We tend to think of such opposites in superior/inferior terms, rather than as simply interconnected. Dollimore notes that, in such a "radical kind of interdependence the absolutely other is somehow integral to the selfsame" (229). Camp, then, "restores vitality to artifice, and vice versa, deriving the artificial from, and feeding it back into or as, the real. The reality is the pleasure of the unreality" (312) and the two become indistinguishable yet, in Dollimore's terms, "radically proximate," exposing the faultlines of dominant culture by so fervently and tongue-in-cheek supporting them.

Saki's particular type of camp entered the public consciousness via bourgeois newspapers such as *The Westminster Gazette* and the *Morning Post*, ironic stages for his debut in light of the fact that "the press coverage of such proceedings [as the 1889-90 "Cleveland Street affair," concerning a male brothel, and Wilde's trials] was important" in creating the identity of the "homosexual" and framing public judgment of supposedly unorthodox sexualities (Cohen, "Legislating the Norm" 198). Thus, in brief stories in middle-class Tory periodicals, Saki covertly values unorthodox sexualities, exposes the aridness of matrimony, undercuts the marriage-promoting conservatism of aunts, and subtly valorizes the rebelliousness and profane sanctity of male-male love, espousing these ideas to a middle- and upper-class readership reared on the accepted truth that their societies and futures should be built on heterosexual foundations: settling down with a wife or husband, having children, and going to work to feed the growing family.

Saki eviscerated such heteronormative conventions of his time in stories about effete, idle young wits, and most explosively in his covertly erotic and thus more confrontational, heated, and dissident stories at a time when, even as the idea of a male homosexual who was not Oscar Wilde trickled into the public consciousness, the dandy figure still thrived in literature. A new, revised edition of *The Dolly Dialogues*, a collection of Anthony Hope's popular 1893 newspaper serial, came out in 1904 with additional chapters. In the series of conversations, Sam Carter is an idle aristocrat who spits out aphorisms, loafs about country house grounds, smells flowers and comments on others' dress, but the harmless effeminacy of the dandy tradition is maintained because his dialogues are always with Dolly Foster, whom he has long loved but who has now married another man. There remained "an excellent market for fiction about impossibly 'smart' aristocrats, such as [Hope's book], E. F. Benson's best-selling *Dodo* (1893) and *Dodo the Second* (1913), the novels of Pearl Craigie [John Oliver Hobbes], and the stories of Saki" (Rose 170). Indeed, Saki's dandy dialogues involving the ephebe Reginald "had considerable success in the *Westminster Gazette*" (Lambert 30) and the subsequent collection *Reginald*, after being "published in 1904 . . . went to four editions in Munro's lifetime" (Gillen 47). At the same time, however, there was a growing fear and suspicion of any subject that smacked of male-male sex. As Carey notes, "Active homosexuality was punishable by law, and homosexuals risked imprisonment or blackmail whenever they told their love" (xiii). John Lane, who published Saki's post-*Reginald* collections starting in 1911, had been affected by the Wilde trials; Lane's *The Yellow Book*, best known for Aubrey Beardsley's illustrations, was falsely reported to be under Wilde's arm when he was arrested before the second trial, leading to vandalism of Lane's offices and a near-revolt by some of the company's authors (Langguth 167-68). After an office boy was linked to Wilde in the course of the trials, "Lane became suspicious of every new acquaintance, sure he was concealing perversions that would be Lane's ruin" (168).[36]

Wilde is the only clear influence on Saki's non-parody pieces of fiction. A pre-Saki story written in 1891, "The Image of the Lost Soul," patently imitates Wilde's homosocial animal–statue fable "The Happy Prince," and Munro scolded Ethel for missing a Wilde play in a July 1893 letter from Burma ("Biography" 662). Langguth argues that it

> was probably no coincidence that both of the plays Hector regretted missing, the Wilde [*A Woman of No Importance*] and Sir Arthur Wing Pinero's *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*, dealt sympathetically with a woman of dubious propriety. However conservative his politics, Hector had to be intrigued and perhaps unsettled by the theme of society ostracizing one of its members for a sexual indiscretion. (47)

There is, however an invaluable clue as to what Munro thought of Wilde. In *The Rise of the Russian Empire*, "Hector H. Munro" notes that sixteenth-century atrocities were not exclusive to Russia, citing, as proof, a "brilliant writer, drawing his materials from the history of mediæval Italy both before and after the Renaissance" (251). The budding historian then quotes, in length, a description of various Europeans' grotesque crimes which Dorian has read in a book (generally assumed to be Huysman's *À Rebours*) with which he is obsessed, in Chapter 11 (in the revised 1891 edition) of Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. This extensive, unique reliance on a fictional reinterpretation of history in Hector H. Munro's serious, 334-page account of 700 years of Russian history sticks out, as does the writer's prefatory note of admiration. Only a few years after Wilde had been released from Reading Gaol into a public which associated the man with vice and disrepute, Munro was so admiring of the author's craft that he was unafraid to slip an out-of-place compliment into his scholarly work. Munro seems to have been well-versed in Wilde's rebellious, aphorism-rich works and Saki's early stabs at fiction are clearly indebted to Wilde's quick-witted, upper-middle class London bachelors. In "Reginald on the Academy," the "Other" may be quoting Wilde to Reginald: "'Some one who Must Not be Contradicted said that a man must be a success by the time he's thirty, or never'"; Reginald replies, "'To have reached thirty . . . is to have failed in life'" (12). Saki was born in 1900, mere months before Munro reached that disappointing age.

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[36] The boy was Edward Shelley, and a footnote in Hyde's book states, "Mr. John Lane, formerly a partner in the firm of Elkin Mathews and John Lane, who was in New York at this time, cabled denying the statement that he had introduced Shelley to Wilde. They became acquainted, he said, when Shelley was in the employment of Mr. Mathews. Mr. Lane never introduced anyone to Mr. Wilde. Their relations were entirely of a business nature" (159).

In a 1912 letter to Lane, Munro makes it clear that he has consulted, amongst others, Robert Ross, "a literary columnist for the *Bystander* and Oscar Wilde's editor and steadfast friend" (Langguth 227), about the best time to publish *The Unbearable Bassington* (see Letter #13 in Appendix Three). According to Mercer, as quoted by Lambert (34) and noted by Frost, Munro socialized with Lady St. Helier, whose salon Wilde had enjoyed, and Munro wrote a letter to Mrs. Allhusen — whom Wilde had consulted about difficulties he was having with *The Picture of Dorian Gray* — about his enlistment in August 1914 (Frost, *Saki: His Context and Development* 115). Many critics, as Drake notes, see Saki as "a diverting inheritor of the Wilde tradition" ("Saki: Some Problems and a Bibliography" 6). Otto calls Reginald "a character resembling the Wildean dandy of the nineties" (23), while Langguth dedicates most of a page to a comparison of Wildean witticisms and Saki's epigrams in the Reginald stories (77) and Frost offers a chapter which considers Saki's writing as initially parodying, then furthering, some of Wilde's ideas.

Certainly, as in some of Wilde's fiction, some of Saki's stories "draw on preconceptions of aristocracy, the Gothic, crime, madness and sin to suggest the fragility of conventional identity" (Frost, *Saki: His Context and Development* 130) and, like Wilde, Munro may have harboured a secret love for boys and/or men. Critics now tend to state Munro's homosexuality as a given fact, but Langguth's assertion of Munro's homosexuality is actually based on suppositions and proofs that are, in fact, ambiguous. Langguth repeats gossip heard by Ben Travers, who worked at John Lane/The Bodley Head (I denote the company as such, in imitation of how the publisher's name appears in print in editions of the time) when Saki was being published there (169, 183, 251) and told Langguth that Munro's "homosexuality was known in publishing circles around 1913" (Notes, 324). Langguth assumes that coded squiggles in Munro's miniature diary refer to gay trysts (115-17) and that Munro was not invited to a banquet held by Lane because Lane, mindful of the Wilde scandal that had briefly involved him, was hearing "word . . . that Hector was homosexual" (183). Langguth notes a locket from someone named Cyril in niece Juniper Bryan's possession (187-88) and makes much of some of Ethel's statements and sentences here and there in her biography (186).

Langguth's conjectures sometimes collapse into sheer speculation and insinuation, as in his casual, unsourced mentions of Munro's visits with Symonds (32-33), his regular employment of "house-boys" (42-43), or his "chumming" (see Ethel's biography, for example, p. 687) with male friends (71, 221-22, 192-93), including fellow journalist A. Rothay Reynolds (165), or his theory that the "Lynx Kitten" to whom Saki dedicates *The Chronicles of Clovis* was one of Munro's male lovers (Langguth 188).[37] Around 1963, in his original introduction to a Bodley Head volume of Saki's stories, Lambert "made two references to possible homosexual activity" by Munro, according to Langguth, but cut them out of the published version to avoid hurting the feelings of Munro's sister-in-law, then still alive (Notes, 324), and Drake, in his 1962 article, was the first to raise the question of Munro's sexuality, noting that Cecil William Mercer, in an unpublished memoir of his cousin written for J. W. Lambert, went "to some length to refute the assumption on the part of literary London that the reason Ethel Munro was so un-cooperative about her brother's papers was that they might have illuminated a side of his life which she wished to conceal--his alleged homosexuality" (8).

Ultimately, then, as Langguth notes about a mysterious locket, in the case of Munro's sexuality, he "did not wish us to know, and we don't" (188). The absence of the reclusive Munro's correspondence and the non-existence of testimonies from lovers, which could confirm Langguth's argument, mean that any hidden or closeted sexuality can never be definitely ascertained. It is not Munro who clearly speaks an unnamed love, but Saki. Saki's queer writings provide the surest evidence of a persona deeply interested in unorthodox male sexualities, while anecdotal evidence from Munro's life must remain intriguingly inconclusive. Langguth notes those elements of Saki's stories that suggest the homoerotic; in his analysis of "Gabriel-Ernest," for instance, he writes:

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[37] The August 1911 dedication, signed "H. H. M.", reads: "To the Lynx Kitten, / With His Reluctantly Given Consent, / This Book Is Affectionately / Dedicated" (*The Penguin Complete Saki* 99).

> Given the times in which he wrote, the erotic may have been obvious only to those who shared Hector's enthusiasm for his portrait of a naked brown-skinned boy. Nearly fifty years later, in a frank and beautifully written examination of his own homosexuality, J. R. Ackerley announced that men of his own background had never excited him, only workingclass men who held that promise of sexual vigor assumed by writers as different as E. M. Forster and D. H. Lawrence. Hector took that longing further and made it more fastidious. Better that the boy be unbred than ill bred; better naked than wearing stained and baggy trousers. (160)

Saki's "queerer" stories branch off from the dandy tradition by either showing homoeroticism or homosexuality, however suppressed, as in "Gabriel-Ernest," or by showing asexual or narcissistic dandyism, where a male figure seems uninterested in others and solely interested, psychologically or sexually, in himself (as Dorian Gray becomes by the end of Wilde's novel). Thus Saki's queerer stories are concerned with related but different strands of male-male love, which I will distinguish as "same-sexual" (homosexuality, homoeroticism, or homosociality, i.e., involving more than one man) or "self-sexual" (asexuality or narcissistic dandyism, i.e., the man interested in himself). As elaborated below, since Reginald, Clovis, and other protagonists come out of the dandy tradition, Saki's campy stories cannot be seen as clearly endorsing male homosexuality in opposition to bourgeois heterosexuality. Saki's camp suggests either the man's disinterest in sex (asexuality), a narcissistic self-desire, and/or a man's desire for another man. Ultimately, Saki's stories, especially as seen in the light of the later Munro-Saki's repudiation of an unpatriotic, unmasculine third sex, do not endorse an unorthodox sexuality so much as they promote powerful, non-heterosexual masculinities. Reginald, for instance, as Stern notes, is an ideal camp protagonist, for "the solitary narcissist . . . admired for his inaccessibility, assumes his most potent form when he seems to be sexually self-sufficient. His most deferential spectator is the one who perceives him as already complete and fulfilled by himself, as if his need for a response in kind could be satisfied only by his own body" (282).

REGINALD'S SELF-SATISFIED T(H)REAT

Saki's "Reginald" stories, all but one of which were collected in *Reginald* (1904), though set in an urban, upper-middle class milieu like that of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* or *The Importance of Being Earnest*, are far more discursive, rambling dandy sketches than any of Wilde's writings, but the pieces proved to be quite popular. These stories comprise a cheeky, homoeroticized revival of the dandy tradition and mark the beginning of Saki's coy tales of self-absorbed, witty young aesthetes. Stern argues that Saki's stories contributed to the notion of modern homosexuality:

> Though the word "gay" is anachronistic when applied to Edwardians, it seems the most concise way to describe the eroticism of Saki's stories while also conveying the sense of flamboyance appropriate to their ethos; indeed, along with the works of Oscar Wilde, whose model Saki consciously followed, these stories made a formative contribution to the current meaning of the term. (Notes, 292)

Sex, sexuality, and the erotic in Saki's work are always covert and often bound up with other themes and attitudes. Sexual suggestion in Saki's fiction usually involves the dandy ephebes Reginald, Clovis, or Comus Bassington and such figures, post-Wilde, were as likely to be associated with the dangerous perversion of homosexuality as asexuality or an effeminate masculinity (which was accepted along with the dandy figure in the nineteenth century, as Booth, Meyer, and other critics note). In fact, there is as much homosexuality as homologous sexuality in these stories, that is, self- or same-sexuality.

The sketches show their well-dressed, idle young protagonist as a dabbler in poetry and art who remains serious about nothing except clothing — "Reginald has a magnificent scorn for details, other than sartorial" (5) — and specializes in uttering glittering, diamond-sharp aphorisms. Otto notes Reginald's camp qualities without actually mentioning the word "camp": "Ridiculous in his exaggerated interest in stylish clothing, epicurean food, and fine liqueurs, he is admirable in his equally extreme determination to annoy bores, Puritans, prudes, prigs, and serious-minded young women" (35). Certainly, if "[c]amp literature fans out from the epigram" (Booth 117), the Reginald stories, in which the plot orbits around the young man's light, witty talk, are camp. Many of these dialogues masquerading as stories are titled according to the main target for Reginald's *bon mots*, such as "Reginald on Worries," "Reginald on House-Parties," and "Reginald on Tariffs." Even though the Reginald pieces total fewer than 40 pages in a nearly 600-page collection of Saki's short fiction, both biographies and many critical studies list some of Reginald's witticisms, while most of the quotations from Saki's stories in reference works usually come from the Reginald pieces or from the mouth of Clovis. Such attention is devoted to these emptily beautiful, superficially clever tricksters because, being "Brilliant, young, handsome, and gay, both characters are admirably prepared to defeat the priggish, unimaginative conformists who keep trying to impose on them; whether they squelch their adversaries with an unanswerable remark or embarrass them with a practical joke, these two imperturbable dandies invariably have the last word" (Stern 276-77). Stephen Robins' *How to be a Complete Dandy: a little* *guide for rakes, bucks, swells, cads, and wits* includes a long entry on Saki because of the two main male protagonists of his early fiction, those

> idle young dandies . . . Clovis and Reginald. Their world is one of unrelenting leisure, and they flit from sleepy London clubs to weekend parties in the country, taking tea with articulate duchesses and chattering in drawing rooms. These effete and lazy aesthetes glide through these realms of upper-crust tranquillity, so bored that all they can do to alleviate their *ennui* is speak in epigrams and cause chaos by means of elaborate hoaxes and practical jokes. (180)

Among other topics, Robins quotes Reginald on that quintessential dandy accoutrement, buttonholes: "'I am just in the mood,' he observed, 'to have my portrait painted by someone with an unmistakable future. So comforting to go down to posterity as "Youth with a Pink Carnation" in catalogue-company with "Child with a Bunch of Primroses" and all that crowd'" (*The Penguin Complete Saki* 38). Robins also quotes Reginald on those Wildean twins, lying and drama: "she took to telling the truth about her age . . . It may have been pleasing to the angels, but her elder sister was not gratified" (26); "'One of these days,' says Reginald, 'I shall write a really great drama. No one will understand the drift of it, but everyone will go back to their homes with a vague feeling of dissatisfaction with their lives. Then they will put up new wallpaper and forget'"[38] (28). Stern argues that the Reginald sketches are "narrative epigrams" (277), concluding with clever inversions, that provide no room for the reader and are simply mouthpieces for Reginald's (and by extension, Saki's) verbal cleverness: "All play and no framework, the stories lack any *raison d'être* except to demonstrate the author's wit. They display an elaborately polished elegance completely out of proportion to the occasion—exactly the kind of flamboyance that Reginald himself displays" (277). Thus Saki the narrator-author flaunts his own campiness in these stories.

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[38] This may be an allusion to Oscar Wilde's purported last words from his deathbed in a Paris apartment: "Either that wallpaper goes or I do." Reginald wears a pink carnation in "The Innocence of Reginald"; Wilde often wore a green carnation (see Robert S. Hichens' 1894 *roman à clef, The Green Carnation*).

"Reginald" (*WG*, September 28, 1901) and the next story in the published collection, "Reginald on Christmas Presents" (*WG*, December 18, 1901) are narrated in the first-person by an anonymous friend or relative of the dandy wit who adds parenthetical comments. The next three stories in the collection, "Reginald on the Academy" (*WG*, June 2, 1902), "Reginald at the Theatre" (*WG*, July 17, 1902), and "Reginald's Peace Poem," plus a few others, involve dialogues with someone simply called the "Other." These intermediaries soon vanish, however, for Reginald dominates the sketches and any narrator is redundant; as Stern notes, Saki is always the narrator[39] and

> is almost as prominent as Reginald was: the stories glory so emphatically in the intricate construction of their sentences and plots as to keep their creator in sight at all times. Saki's reluctance to design a story without pointing to the genius behind it accords with his preference for an ostentatious, witty narrative idiom that contradicts the sense of impersonal, absolute authority usually associated with omniscient narration. (278)

The Reginald stories in particular, as Stern notes, are drenched with the champagne-dry irony of Saki the narrator, a voice which both draws the reader in and keeps him or her at a distance. In his narrative evolution, Saki removes the "I" friend of Reginald, then the "Other," and eventually, Stern argues, Saki removes the Reginald or Clovis hero, for Saki's narrative voice is itself the central force behind every story, "encoding his position in the story's narrative style" (279) and even communicating the author-narrator's homoerotic interest in the effete idler (i.e., suggesting Saki the persona's same-sexual love for a self-sexual character): "Reginald closed his eyes with the elaborate weariness of one who has rather nice eyelashes and thinks it useless to conceal the fact" ("Reginald's Drama," 28). Saki, then, *is* his stories, and the stories *are* Saki, for the authorial and narrative persona are one with the fiction they inhabit and which in turn embodies them.

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[39] Stern's observation is, in fact, an unwitting development and clarification of a remark by Otto, in his 1969 thesis, on the constant presence of a narrator in Saki's stories (43).

It is a Reginald story that first "pioneers" the camp Saki and Saki's camp, moving away from Wilde's urban setting and into the neo-pagan countryside, to which Saki lends a uniquely sinister air and outsider ethos; certainly Saki proves the great exception to the rule that "Camp people have always shown markedly unfilial feelings towards Mother Nature" (Booth 45). "Reginald's Choir Treat" (*WG*, June 24, 1902), although published before "Reginald at the Theatre," also contains no "Other" to record or reflect the hero's wit. The tale begins with a quotation from Reginald's letter "to his most darling friend" warning this close, likely male friend, to not be a pioneer. Then Saki the narrator breaks in: "Reginald, in his way, was a pioneer" (16). Not only is this statement, in retrospect, a nicely metafictional comment on the literary importance of Saki's dandy stories as perhaps the first of the post-Wilde century to advance a homoerotic, camp, witty style, but Reginald soon proves to be a rather queer leader in the story. His unique, classical looks (linking him with the ancient, Pan-theist Mediterranean world of literary imagination) and sartorial dandy-ness (exemplified by a pink carnation in his buttonhole ["The Innocence of Reginald"]) are his most obvious "pioneering" qualities: "None of the rest of his family had anything approaching Titian hair or a sense of humour, and they used primroses as a table decoration. It followed that they never understood Reginald" (16). The echoes here of the misunderstood, closeted gay teenager who is an outsider in his own home may seem anachronistic or prescient at first. Yet Saki next suggests a hoped-for (re)conversion to heterosexuality: "Therefore the family was relieved when the vicar's daughter undertook the reformation of Reginald. Her name was Amabel [grafting the Latin roots for "love" and "beautiful"] . . . Amabel was accounted a beauty and intellectually gifted" (16-17). Heterosexuality is here linked with religiosity, and not only is Reginald seen as a "wayward member" (17), but the "unsuspecting pupil" is to begin his "reformation" with "tea in the vicarage garden" (17), where he shall be soothed by a pretty girl and tamed nature in a devout setting.

Yet as in "Gabriel-Ernest," nature can mask the socially "unnatural" while simultaneously naturalizing it. Nature hides, feeds, and shelters the young werewolf's perverse, carnal appetite for young boys, making it easier for civilization to endorse what it never understood, and so Amabel naively "believed in the healthy influence of natural surroundings, never having been in Sicily, where things are different" (17). Reginald, like Gabriel-Ernest, has a different nature, and it will be unwittingly given the freedom to roam by uptight, upright bourgeois society, only revealed through the perverse mythic figure of Pan, so closely associated with the Mediterranean fertility myths whose subversive, wantonly sexual details were often conveniently omitted by many English classical scholars. Reginald quickly combats Amabel's lecture on the sinfulness of a wasted life with an example drawn from their "natural" surroundings: "Reginald recalled the lilies of the field, 'which simply sat and looked beautiful, and defied competition'" (17). With this cheeky Biblical allusion to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount — "And why take ye thought for raiment [clothing]? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin" (Matt. 6:28) — Saki not only likens the self-sexual Reginald to the Messiah, but foreshadows Reginald's decidedly un-Christlike leading of his flock of child followers in the nude. Reginald turns his knowledge of the Bible against Amabel and into a justification for truly being like those flowers, the ultimate asexual, or self-sexual, dandy — the narcissist who only desires and loves himself, having no time for or interest in others. Amabel, horrified by her "'indecently vain'" pupil, protests that he is no "'example for us to follow'" (17), but Reginald is soon a leader of younger pupils, using fauns, rather than flora, as inspiration. A religious choir will be led into the chaotic, sexually liberating wild, and Reginald's hedonist paganism will thus conquer straight-laced, repressive Christianity.

Saki's sly, underdog-defending tone and the reader's possible prior knowledge of Reginald's rebellious character lead the reader to not only side with Reginald but anticipate his revolt against conformity, siding with a young dandy who thwarts the dominant institutions of religion and heterosexuality by turning a children's choir outing into a Bacchanalia. When Amabel suggests that Reginald help her "supervise the annual outing of the bucolic infants who composed the local choir, his eyes shone with the dangerous enthusiasm of a convert" (17). But Amabel, soon ill with a cold, leaves Reginald alone to express his true, beautiful love by fulfilling the

> dream of his life . . . stage-manage a choir outing. With strategic insight, he led his shy, bullet-headed charges to the nearest woodland stream and allowed them to bathe; then he seated himself on their discarded garments and discoursed on their immediate future, which, he decreed, was to embrace a Bacchanalian procession through the village. Forethought had provided the occasion with a supply of tin whistles, but the introduction of a he-goat from a neighbouring orchard was a brilliant afterthought. Properly, Reginald explained, there should have been an outfit of panther skins; as it was, those who had spotted handkerchiefs were allowed to wear them, which they did with thankfulness. Reginald recognized the impossibility, in the time at his disposal, of teaching his shivering neophytes a chant in honour of Bacchus, so he started them off with a more familiar, if less appropriate, temperance hymn. After all, he said, it is the spirit of the thing that counts. Following the etiquette of dramatic authors on first nights, he remained discreetly in the background while the procession, with

> extreme diffidence and the goat, wound its way lugubriously towards the village. The singing had died down long before the main street was reached, but the miserable wailing of pipes brought the inhabitants to their doors. Reginald said he had seen something like it in pictures; the villagers had seen nothing like it in their lives, and remarked as much freely.
>
> Reginald's family never forgave him. They had no sense of humour. (18)

Saki ends the story with a nod to his chummy reader who, presumably, has a sense of humour and, perhaps, a sense of camp. We can appreciate Reginald, this black wolf in sheep's clothing, a devious trickster whose pranks hide a deeply subversive, unsettling sexuality.

Saki turns the British countryside into a pastoral, Arcadian Greece of myth, with its woodland stream (where the children bathe, much like Gabriel-Ernest), goat, and orchards. The performative, theatrical nature of camp is emphasized by Saki's play metaphors: Reginald "stage-manage[s]" the entire affair and, like a dramatist on opening night, remains "discreetly in the background" (see also Dingley 47 for the appearance of Pan on Edwardian stages). The director notes his production's similarity to "pictures," suggesting the stage (as in a dramatic tableau; see *OED*, "picture," *sb*. **2.e.**), paintings (see Footnotes 52 and 55), film (as in "motion pictures"; see *OED*, "picture," *sb*. **2.i.** and "project," *v*., **9.d.**), which then relied on expressive acting and usually imitated theatre and/or photographs (the chemical photographic process was discovered and refined in the 1830s and 1840s and "picture," in relation to the photographic image, appeared in print a few decades later; see *OED*, "picture," *sb*. **2.b.** and "photograph," *sb*. **a.**, **b.**), the most fitting of which would be von Gloeden's shots of young naked men posing as Bacchus or as fauns (see Footnote 53). In the story, the youngsters' nudity is clearly implied by the "thankfulness" with which they wear handkerchiefs and their "shivering." The presumably co-ed group is effeminately masculinized by the dandy, mock-classical ritual in which they're forced to participate by Reginald, who himself is like "Bacchus, or Pan with his flair for Panics, or a Lord of Misrule" (Fogle 90).[40] Perhaps in homage to himself, then, the dandy trickster has his charges "embrace a Bacchanalian procession," which harks back to the mythical god of wine (hence Reginald's ironic use of a "temperance hymn" and his clever double pun, "spirit of the thing") and revelry who made women hysterical and often violent in their outdoor ramblings.[41] The use of the goat and whistles or "pipes" also associates the procession with the horned Bacchus and possibly Pan and the lustful satyr figure who, post-war, would be linked to more sexually sinister dealings with children in e.e. cumming's "[in Just-]" (1920). The pederastic overtones of Reginald's ploy are avoided, as the sexes and ages of the miserable children are never specified, the young rogue's pagan lark glosses over the proceedings with a classical veneer, and Reginald ostensibly commits the mischief to rebel against Amabel and his parents. Yet the implications are clear: evading conversion, the pagan god-like Reginald heretically challenges religiously sanctioned, monogamous heterosexual romance by flaunting the nudity, if not sexuality, of children in a homage to feminine, drunken, violent orgies of myth. He is seen as a pariah ever after by church, community, and his own family. This act is not merely rebellion against routine, but a clear abuse of leadership (with sexual overtones) in order to avoid and even mock heterosexual love.

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[40] Certainly these lines from a translation of Ovid's retelling of the myth of the vain ephebe Narcissus ring true for both Reginald and Gabriel-Ernest:

> . . . He looks in wonder,
> Charmed by himself, spell-bound, and no more moving
> Than any marble statue. Lying prone
> He sees his eyes, twin stars, and locks as comely
> As those of Bacchus or the god Apollo,
> Smooth cheeks, and ivory neck, and the bright beauty
> Of countenance, and a flush of color rising
> In the fair whiteness. Everything attracts him
> That makes him so attractive. Foolish boy,
> He wants himself; the loved become the lover . . . (70)

[41] See, for instance, Book III of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Euripides' *Bacchae*, in which Pentheus is "torn to pieces by his own mother" (Pater, "A Study of Dionysus" 46), and Pater's rewriting of the Bacchus legend in "Denys l'Auxerrois" (1887). Bacchus' association with women and young men is outlined in Book VI (ll. 587-600) and in more detail in Book IV of the *Metamorphoses*:

> The priest had ordered Bacchic celebration,
> With serving-women, freed of toil, and ladies
> As well as servants, dressed alike, in skins
> Of animals; all should unbind the ribbons,
> Let the hair stream, wear garlands, carry wands
> Vine-wreathed. The god, his minister proclaimed,
> Would otherwise be fearful in his anger.
> So all obey, young wives and graver matrons,
> Forget their sewing and weaving, the daily duties,
> Burn incense, call the god by all his titles,
> The Loud One, the Deliverer from Sorrow,
> Son of the Thunder, The Twice-Born, The Indian,
> The Offspring of Two Mothers, God of the Wine-Press,
> The Night-hallooed, and all the other names
> Known in the towns of Greece. He is young, this god,
> A boy forever, fairest in the Heaven,
> Virginal, when he comes before the people
> With the horns laid off his forehead. . . .
> Satyrs, Bacchantes, follow, and Silenus,
> The wobbling old drunkard, totters after,
> . . .

Saki's campiness bred in nature slyly and winkingly normalizes nudity and free sexuality through a festive, carnivalesque spirit as the true wildness of people and nature collides with the pretentious, restrictive culture of a church group. The campy, aggressive paganism of the self-sexual Reginald's "choir treat" exposes the artifice of a sober, passive, marriage- and religion-based world.[42] The sense of camp arises from the collision of nature and culture, as Reginald's wild, sexual paganism overruns the tame, uptight priggishness of church-bound heterosexuality. Reginald's reckless abandon and

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> Wherever Bacchus goes, the cries of women
> Hail him, and young men's joyful shouts, and drum
> And timbrels sound, and cymbals clash, and flutes
> Pipe shrill. (81-82)

[42] While Forster's "A Story of a Panic" presages elements of "The Music on the Hill," Saki's "Reginald's Choir Treat" anticipates Forster's more heterosexual 1907 story "The Curate's Friend," wherein "the Faun" or Faunus (similar to Pan) comes to Wiltshire, where he is thought by the local curate to be the devil. The Faun befriends the curate, though, who tells the figure to make others happy, which he promptly does by having a woman fall in love with a youth at a picnic. See also Footnote 44.

his adoption of the role of hysteria-inducing Bacchus make for an explicitly implicit suggestion that he is queerer than most young rebels.

In her memoir of her brother, Ethel oddly asserts that the characters in *Reginald* "are all imaginary" but that the titular dandy himself "is a type composed of several young men, studied during his years of town life; Hector told me that more than one of his acquaintances considered himself the original" (682). If Munro knew the type well and, on some level at least, fancied such young men, a preference perhaps veiled by Ethel's last words of her memoir, that her brother "had a tremendous sympathy for young men struggling to get on, and in practical ways helped many a lame dog" (715), Munro's rebellious desire may be displaced onto the persona of Saki and vicariously expressed through the defiant outsider Reginald.

Ethel's assertion that her brother's work is devoid of sex, as with much of her biography, is deeply flawed by her childhood-formed conception of her brother as a perpetual imp who merely continued his pranks and hoaxes in the pages of his fiction and rarely touched on adult themes or issues. With Reginald, Gillen remarks, Saki "pioneered in [sic] the exposition of a certain type of young man infesting the British upper classes, irresponsible and often scatterbrained" and the author "must be credited with making the first dissection of the species and with inventing this particular figure" (47). Saki also blazes a sexually dissident trail that is more incendiary but not so bright and sparkling as Reginald's witticisms, so it is unsurprising that many critics, such as Gillen, miss the campy, sexual nature of such a story as "Reginald's Choir Treat":

> [Saki] almost invariably avoided [sex] in his fiction. Was it natural reticence, distaste, or downright ignorance of the subject? Whatever the reason, the absence of this subject is another of the characteristics of Munro's writing, which is more

> the pity, because an occasional dollop of sexuality would have made his work all the more plausible and delectable. (102)

In fact, after perusing "Reginald's Choir Treat," it is difficult, if not impossible, to read of Reginald teaching a young boy how to mix absinthe ("Reginald," 7), talking about the lift-boy ("Reginald on Christmas Presents," "Reginald on Tariffs"), reading Nordau's *Degeneration*[43] and showing little interest in a de-skirted young woman ("Reginald on Tariffs"), and his coy conversation with the conspicuously non-gendered "Other" that ends with the suggestion of spending a "'fortnight in Paris'" ("The Innocence of Reginald," 40), without seeing Reginald as non-heterosexual. "'Forbidden fizz is often the sweetest,'" Reginald remarks ("Reginald in Russia," 46), and Reginald's effervescent taste, somewhere on the spectrum between Peter Pan asexuality and pederasty, smacks of what Edwardians (and many modern readers) would consider perverse and illicit.[44] Saki uses children to mask the more adult unorthodox sexualities of his queerer stories, including Gabriel-Ernest's pederasty and the narrator's and characters' desire for older, often brown-skinned, "Beautiful Boys" (Booth 131-32). (The boy in "The Music on the Hill" is "brown and beautiful" [163], Gabriel-Ernest has "brown limbs" [64], Comus' mother imagines him "browning his skin somewhere east of Suez" in *The Unbearable Bassington* [589], and in "Laura," the title character decides that she will reincarnate into an otter and then "a little brown, unclothed Nubian boy" [243], which she does, turning into what Saki has her brother describe as a "'little beast of a naked brown Nubian boy'" [245]. Lane notes that, with the African boys in *The Unbearable Bassington*, "the narrative fetishizes their sexuality as 'exotic' [217]; the same could be said of the Slavic youth Clovis eyes enviously and lustfully in "Mrs. Packletide's Tiger": "'my figure is quite as good as that Russian dancing boy's'" [118].) Such desires often seem more distant because they are usually expressed by Gabriel-Ernest, Reginald, and other lads, boys who, "like Barrie's, 'never do grow up,' but it is the amorality of youth, not its innocence, that they refuse to leave behind" (Rose 188-89).[45]

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[43] Reginald's choice of literature is an ironic and telling allusion; journalist Max Nordau's 1892 work *Entartung*, which appeared in English three years later, condemned tendencies in modern art and literature and treated the artist as pathologically disturbed, degenerate, and abnormal (Greenslade 120-22). An 1895 review of the book connected it with Wilde's conviction for homosexuality and Wilde himself petitioned for his release on the grounds that he suffered from a degenerate "'sexual madness' of a type peculiar to 'the literary and aesthetic temperament'" (123). The notion of the "'Criminal degenerate' . . . was perhaps the most perfected term of degenerationist abuse, encoding sexual perversion, promiscuity and the 'unspeakable'" (24).

[44] Reginald's charges' nakedness by the stream and the homoerotic encounter between Van Cheele and Gabriel-Ernest at a pool in the woods may have influenced, and are clearly echoed by, Chapter Twelve of *A Room with a View* (1908; Forster began it in 1901-02 while in Italy), in which Mr. Beebe (a clergyman!), Freddy, and George bathe together in a small pond in Italy. Forster, then homosexually-repressed, glosses over the homoerotic scene with philosophical, theological, and classical language (involving Nature, Eden, and Michelangelo), but then, in a section where the homosocial barely masks the homosexual, describes the trio splashing each other as they "began to play" (201), running after each other, pretending to be Indians, and playing rugby and then soccer with their bundles of clothes, until, finally, "the two young men were delirious" (202). Mr. Beebe quickly resorts to the strictly formal when women approach and reintroduce the heterosexual to the scene; all homoeroticism, in the guise of a divine immersion in Nature, fades, as does the pond, in an obviously phallic dwindling that may have inspired, in turn, Saki's "The Pond" (see Chapter 2) and Thirza's emasculation of her husband by draining the pond on their property (see Footnote 67):

> That evening and all that night the water ran away. On the morrow the pool had shrunk to its old size and lost its glory. It had been a call to the blood and to the relaxed will, a passing benediction whose influence did not pass, a holiness, a spell, a momentary chalice for youth. (204)

SAKI CAMPS IN EARNEST

With his seminal story "Gabriel-Ernest" (*WG*, May 29, 1909), Saki pays his final homage to Wilde with the basic plot and the punning title of the story, but then, in style and content, breaks from the urban, aesthetic writer with his violent, dark, tongue-in-cheek, selves-referential story in which a marginalized, unorthodox male sexuality speaks a far more savage and natural name than Pater's or Wilde's neo-Platonic ideals of male-male love. The plot of "Gabriel-Ernest" echoes Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (which many contemporary critics considered perverse and degenerate; modern critics debate whether the novel is homoerotic or a "queer" work), with an artist revealing the presence of an erotic young boy to an aristocrat. "Gabriel-Ernest," like its title, clashes the sacred — dignified aunts, an upper-class estate, and the bucolic countryside — and profane — homosexuality, murder, and cannibalism — in a story that mixes supernatural suspense, homoeroticism, black humour, and camp. When the savage teenager is found reclining naked and unconcerned on Van Cheele's sofa, the homoeroticism of the story rather clearly "speaks its name;" however, entwined as it is with the camp, classicism, and anti-auntness of the story, such a daring announcement of a homosexual presence may have gone largely unnoticed by a public for whom the notion of homosexuality had still not yet fully asserted itself. Sinfield argues that, until his trials, "Wilde was perceived as effeminate, to be sure; but not, thereby, as queer. In the mid twentieth century, effeminacy and queerness became virtually synonymous, along with the rest of the Wildean manner" (vii). Before that time, in a limbo period between Wilde's trial and when the public's monolithic notion of male homosexuality took hold, the darkly subversive "Gabriel-Ernest," one of Saki's first stories as a committed writer then settled in London, appeared. A tale of same-sex desire seething within a cauldron of sexual metamorphosis, classical allusions, rebellion against aunts, the valuing of nature, and subversion of aristocratic pretensions, this slyly rebellious, blackly comic story in a Tory newspaper, read in hearth and home by genteel, straight-laced, middle- and upper-class men and women, thrust unorthodox male homosexuality under their very noses.

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[45] Rose notes the criticism of *Peter Pan* in *The Unbearable Bassington* by two teachers:

> . . . "can you imagine a lot of British boys, or boys of any country that one knows of, who would stay contentedly playing children's games in an underground cave when there were wolves and pirates and Red Indians to be had for the asking on the other side of the trap door?"
>
> The form-master laughed. "You evidently think that the 'Boy who would not grow up' must have been written by a 'grown-up who could never have been a boy.'" (579)

In "Gabriel-Ernest," a "wild beast" in Van Cheele's woods turns out to be a boy who is later found reposing naked in the bachelor's morning-room. Van Cheele passes the boy off as a lost waif; his aunt takes him under her wing, christens him "Gabriel-Ernest," and enlists his help with her Sunday school children's tea. Van Cheele discovers that the boy turns into a murderous werewolf at dusk, but he is too late to save the child whom Gabriel-Ernest escorts home from the tea; the sun sets, the victim screams, and both vanish. When Gabriel-Ernest's clothes are discovered near a stream, Van Cheele's aunt, thinking the pair drowned, naïvely mourns "her lost foundling. It was on her initiative that a memorial brass was put up in the parish church to 'Gabriel-Ernest, an unknown boy, who bravely sacrificed his life for another'" (69).

In the story, conventional, bourgeois values collide with a sexually subversive, wild creature. The name of the titular protagonist likewise mixes the sacred and the profane, combining the Biblical name of the divine messenger and archangel Gabriel with a homonym for "Earnest," which not only means "Intense, ardent" ("Earnest," def. *a.*, 1.) but is also, in the tradition of Wilde's punning 1894 comedy *The Importance of Being Earnest*, a play on the word "uranist," a nineteenth-century term for a homosexual ("Uranism"); Uranian literature, mostly poetry, aestheticized and spiritualized homosexual, usually man-boy, love and "drew extensively on classical mythology to express homosexual feelings," gaining "a select cult status in the 1890s" (Bristow 83).[46]

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[46] The *OED* also notes that "urnest" is an obsolete form of "earnest," an obsolete noun meaning "intense passion or desire" (Volume XIX, p. 343; Vol. V, p. 25). As Timothy d'Arch Smith notes, Wilde may have also been influenced by *Love in Earnest*, the title of John Gambril Nicholson's collection of poetry, much of it about boy-love, which appeared in 1892, two years before a prose-poem by Nicholson and Wilde's "Phrases and Philosophies for the Use of the Young" appeared in the same issue of the *Chameleon*; in that same issue of the undergraduate magazine, which appeared just before *The Importance of Being Earnest* was produced, other Uranian (d'Arch Smith uses the word to mean "love for boys") pieces appeared, including one by Lord Alfred Douglas (xvii-xix). See d'Arch Smith for a full account of Uranian poetry from 1889 to 1930.

The first citation of the term in *The Oxford English Dictionary* comes from an 1896 issue of the *Journal of Comparative Neurology* and the word is derived from Plato's reference to Aphrodite in *Symposium* as "Uranian" (in an 1898 letter quoted in the *OED*, Wilde, who excelled as a classics scholar at Dublin's Trinity College and then at Oxford, uses the term[47]; see "Uranian," def. A. *adj*., 1. c.). The nineteenth-century meanings of "Uranian" (from the Greek "Uranos," or Heaven, suggesting a higher form of love), "uranism," and "uranist" come from "urning," a word for "a homosexual"[48] coined by K. H. Ulrichs in 1864 ("Urning"). This pseudo-scientific term was used in such works as Richard von Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886)[49] and Edward Carpenter's "The Intermediate Sex" (1894, 1906). (See Ledger and Luckhurst 302-07 for the pertinent selections from these works.) The compound name of "Gabriel-Ernest" can, then, be traced back not only to Uranian writings and Oscar Wilde's work,[50] but also to the medico-legal establishment's first attempts to define a non-heterosexuality. In the lingering shadow of Wilde's trial, the encounter between an effete male aristocrat and a coy, naked youth in "Gabriel Ernest"[51] is a winking, nudging promotion of a campy queerness at a time when the aristocratic dandy tradition, with its accepted effeminate masculinity, was metamorphosing into homosexuality, that anti-bourgeois, stigmatized perversion.

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[47] The letter is dated by *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde* editors Merlin Holland and Hart-Davis as having been written around 18 February 1898 (1019) and reads, in part: ". . . a poet in prison for loving boys loves boys. To have altered my life would have been to have admitted that Uranian love is ignoble. I hold it to be noble – more noble than other forms." (Holland and Hart-Davis note beneath this letter: "In 1896 André Raffalovich published a book in French called *Uranisme et Unisexualité*, containing a chapter on Wilde, which had been separately published in 1895.") Wilde's letter was to Robert Ross, the same columnist and editor whom Munro consulted about the publication of *The Unbearable Bassington*, according to correspondence with John Lane (see below and Appendix Three, Letters 13 and 14).

[48] "Homosexuality" was a term coined in 1869 by Karl Maria Kertbeny and "homosexual" was used in an adjectival sense in the sexology studies of *Sexual Inversion* by Havelock Ellis in, for instance, "Case XVII" (see Ledger and Luckhurst 309-13).

[49] Von Krafft-Ebing's "findings" on "'aberrant' sexualities" in his book, "first translated into English in 1893 . . . [were] still being . . . used by psychiatrists into the 1960s, reflecting some fairly persistent conceptions of deviance" (Editors' Notes, Ledger and Luckhurst 313).

[50] For more on Wilde's pun on "earnest," see Craft 134-38.

When Van Cheele first sees the young boy in his woods, the homoeroticism of the narrator's and characters' gazes nearly drips from the page:

> On a shelf of smooth stone overhanging a deep pool in the hollow of an oak coppice a boy of about sixteen lay asprawl, drying his wet brown limbs luxuriously in the sun. His wet hair, parted by a recent dive, lay close to his head, and his light-brown eyes, so light that there was almost a tigerish gleam in them, were turned towards Van Cheele with a certain lazy watchfulness. (64)

The sensual languor of this exotic boy and the intense focus of Van Cheele's gaze, which even takes in the colour of the lad's eyes, increase the eroticism here. This scene of a beautiful boy by a pond is reminiscent of the onanistic tale of metamorphosis made most famous by Ovid — the myth of Narcissus, the ephebe who falls in love with his own reflection, drowns, and is mourned by a woman (as the aunt grieves for Gabriel-Ernest here). Indeed, the artist Cunningham later tells Van Cheele that, when he saw the "'naked boy . . . standing out on the bare hillside . . . His pose was so suggestive of some wild faun of Pagan myth that I instantly wanted to engage him as a model'" (68).[52] The boy is thus, for the Edwardian bourgeois reader, safely associated with the "innocent," acceptable historical portraits of naked youths in Greek myth and Western art.[53]

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[51] Langguth points out that the eroticism of a young boy would have been more tolerable and even "marketable" to Edwardian readers than a similar, more pornographic-seeming depiction of a young girl (160).

[52] Cunningham's remark emphasizes the influence of classical nudes in painting and photography on the depictions of the boy in "Gabriel-Ernest". Saki's cloaking of the nude lad in subtle allusions to mythological figures not only suggests Munro's typically Victorian education, steeped as it was in the classics, but allows Saki, like a nineteenth-century artist who would create a "frankly erotic painting," to "place their nudes in a historical setting to deflect criticism" (Pearsall 93). Thus, "throughout the nineteenth century the nude in art was reluctantly accepted – if it was served up in a religious, classical or mythological setting" (22). In nineteenth-century England, there was a shift of focus from Roman to Greek history and Ancient Greece in painting (see Richard Jenkyns' "Hellenism in Victorian Painting"), letters (Matthew Arnold championed Hellenism), and literature (Wilde, Pater, and others were well-versed in Greek myth). Greek studies took hold in Victorian public schools; Munro may have gleaned much of his

If Van Cheele quietly desires this youth, the boy himself desires even younger males, as the aristocrat learns:

> "What do you feed on?" he asked.
>
> "Flesh," said the boy, and he pronounced the word with slow relish, as though he were tasting it.
>
> "Flesh! What flesh?"
>
> "Since it interests you, rabbits, wild-fowl, hares, poultry, lambs in their season, children when I can get any; they're usually too well locked-in at night, when I do most of my hunting. It's quite two months since I tasted child-flesh." (65)

Thus the grotesque but unbelievable horror of cannibalism — Saki's take on the myth of Lycaon, whom Zeus turned into a wolf after the king of Arcadia had, in most versions of the tale, "served him up a human child (normally his grandson Arcas)" (Irving 54; cf. Ovid, Book I) — stands in for unspeakable homosexual and pederast desires, those

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knowledge of the classics and Greek myth during his time at Bedford Grammar School, from September 1885 to December 1886 (Langguth, Notes, 322).

Frost notes that "The Story of St. Vespaluus" is a satire of the story of Saint Sebastian, the Guido Reni portrait of whom was "one of Wilde's favourite paintings"; when Munro travelled around Europe in the late 1880s, he counted the St Sebastians in each gallery he visited with his sister (*Saki: His Context and Development* 137; see also "Biography" 655). See Frost 138-39 for an analysis of the story's use of spectacle and its collision of homoeroticism with Christianity.

[53] Of course, particularly to the modern reader or viewer, there is considerably more eroticism to be found in such literary scenes and paintings where nude boys are often presented in a way that seems to blend classical sculpture and painting, the camp, the grotesque, and the sexually suggestive. As David Bergman notes, gay photography, too, has long

> played with the aesthetic tensions between the classic and gothic. At the turn of the century Frederick Rolfe, better known as Baron Corvo, Fred Holland Day, Wilhelm von Pluschow, John Gambril Nicholson, Vincenzo Galdi, and perhaps most famous, Wilhelm von Gloeden recorded beautiful young men in the nude or nearly so. Often they posed the models in classical positions, as a young Bacchus, or as Pan playing on his pipe, or else in the presence of classical statuary. The result never quite managed, however, to achieve the right Hellenic sweetness and light—and even they seemed to feel some humor in the situation. (104)

Munro could well have been influenced by such photography, particularly that of von Gloeden, whose work (best known between 1890 and 1914) was publicly exhibited in European cities. The photographs displayed "the erotics of camp, for by pitting classic and grotesque versions of the body together and rendering them both as mere poses it was able to create a 'carnaval of contradictions'" (105).

"savage propensities" (*The Penguin Complete Saki* 67) of Gabriel-Ernest which are natural (that is, both of nature and innate) yet socially unacceptable.[54]

When this object of Van Cheele's latent desire confronts Van Cheele, he becomes horrified, as though he wishes to repress his fascination with this nude boy who threatens to feast on him:

> The boy turned like a flash, plunged into the pool, and in a moment had flung his wet and glistening body half-way up the bank where Van Cheele was standing. . . . His foot slipped as he made an involuntary backward movement, and he found himself almost prostrate on the slippery weed-grown bank, with those tigerish yellow eyes not very far from his own. Almost instinctively he half raised his hand to his throat. (65)

It is not until the boy cheekily enters Van Cheele's house, though, that Saki's story moves from homoeroticism to his particular kind of camp, whereby wild nature (i.e., non-heterosexual desire) clashes with bourgeois or upper-class culture (i.e., heterosexual blandness) as Saki suspends the seriousness of conventional society in equilibrium with the comedy of the bizarre situation. This campy rebellion against the constraints of boring middle-class marriage is emphasized by Saki's dandy characters' resistance to and thwarting of the aunt figure, a typical upholder of conventional bourgeois values and a promoter of marriage. In "Gabriel-Ernest," the aristocratic, very proper Van Cheele represses his fascination with the naked boy in his woods as if the flagrant sexuality which the boy represents is deep within himself: "His position as a parish councillor and justice of the peace seemed somehow compromised by the fact that he was harbouring a personality of such doubtful repute on his property" (66). He remains silent and uneasy about the boy, but is appalled to discover him the next day within his house, threatening to expose everything:

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[54] See Irving 90-95 for further discussion of the Lycaon myth. Saki's lycanthropic story also contains some obvious mythic parallels to Dionysus, as explicated in Walter Pater's "A Study of Dionysus" (*Greek Studies*, 1895). Pater's cannibalism- and pederasty-tinged version of the myth notes that Dionysus (the Greeks' Bacchus) later evolved into a werewolf in Greek and French folklore, and was often associated with the wolf. Pater writes:

> the sacred women of Dionysus ate, in mystical ceremony, raw flesh, and drank blood . . . commemorat[ing] . . . the actual sacrifice of a fair boy deliberately torn to pieces, fading at last into symbolical offering. At Delphi, the wolf was preserved for [Dionysus] . . . there were places in which, after the sacrifice of a kid [goat] to him, a curious mimic pursuit of the priest who had offered it represented the still surviving horror of one who had thrown a child to the wolves. . . . Plutarch tell[s] us how, before the battle of Salamis, with the assent of Themistocles, three Persian captive youths were offered to Dionysus *the Devourer*. (48)

> As he entered the [morning-]room the melody made way for a pious invocation. Gleefully asprawl on the ottoman, in an attitude of almost exaggerated repose, was the boy of the woods. He was drier than when Van Cheele had last seen him, but no other alteration was noticeable in his toilet.
>
> "How dare you come here?" asked Van Cheele furiously.
>
> "You told me I was not to stay in the woods," said the boy calmly.
>
> "But not to come here. Supposing my aunt should see you!" (67)

The ephebe's "attitude of almost exaggerated repose" is a campy pose.[55] Camp's very "attitude," crystallized by the naked boy's (re)pose on Van Cheele's ottoman in a four-way collision of nature : culture and wildness : domesticity, is further echoed, as Stern notes, by Saki's narrative voice: "with his combination of exhibitionism and inaccessibility, [Saki] always manages to announce his presence while maintaining his distance, which is to say that he exemplifies what contemporary gay male culture calls 'attitude'" (282). Dollimore argues that the "masquerade of camp becomes less a self-concealment than a kind of attack" and that "it is misleading to say that camp *is* the gay sensibility; camp is an invasion and subversion of other sensibilities, and works via parody, pastiche, and exaggeration" (311). Camp mocks the (often oblivious) dominant from within, so it is unsurprising that Gabriel-Ernest is adopted by the naïve, proper society he threatens. Van Cheele's concern that this naked boy in his drawing-room will embarrass him in front of his aunt is unwarranted, for "Miss Van Cheele was enormously interested" in the boy; a "naked homeless boy appealed to [her] as warmly as a stray kitten or derelict puppy would have done" (67). The sense of camp in "Gabriel-Ernest" arises from precisely the interrelated tension of Saki's simultaneous evocation of sympathy for the aunt's sensible concern for the boy and hilarious disbelief in the aunt's solicitude. The aunt's reaction, then, is both utterly credible and incredible and, in this exposure of the extremes of all-important social conventions in Edwardian England as both supremely reasonable and completely insane, Saki pushes the aestheticized irony of "Gabriel-Ernest" into that amorphous world of camp, which "has no causal nexus, no unifying principle. Such opposites as cynicism and sentimentality, envy and affection, indecency and fastidiousness, individuality and imitation, are not attracted to one another in it, but remain suspended in constant, uneasy opposition" (Booth 111-12).

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[55] The boy's posture is not only suggestive of languor, "one of the key notes of aestheticism" (Jenkyns, "Hellenism . . ." 115), but is also a variation on the artistic figure of the reclining nude (prominent in paintings from the 1500s on, where figures were often from Greek myth), who is "shorthand for the world of art, a world in which the artist is predominantly male and the nude is always female" (Borzello 6). The boy's effeminacy is thus suggested, but his possibly self-conscious parody of his artfully erotic position — his "attitude of almost exaggerated repose" — is both a subversion and campy reinterpretation of the typically static, objectified, controlled female model in male artists' paintings, where her "look is languid, just a few steps away from come-hither" and "[t]here is something more than a little erotic . . . about these images of reposing women" (Nochlin 172). Gabriel-Ernest doesn't care about the "public consumption" (Borzello 7) of him as a nude in a grand room, for he exists outside "civilized" culture and society. Neither Cunningham's aestheticizing look nor Van Cheele's fascinated gaze can trap or define the boy, as he not only controls the way he is seen, but ultimately escapes their, and the reader's, eye when he eludes capture, consumes the object of his desire, and vanishes from the narrative.

Van Cheele's aunt even christens the boy after having him cleaned and clothed, thus recreating him: "'We must call him something till we know who he really is,' she said. 'Gabriel-Ernest, I think; those are nice suitable names'" (67). The aunt figure in Victorian literature is typically a battleaxe who is oblivous to the effeminate and promoted heterosexuality and marriage; thus Miss Van Cheele's homoerotic moniker for this foundling is all the more ironic. Often, in Saki's stories, "the Victorian aunt is ridiculed as a moribund symbol of a past age of religious and sexual repression and conformity" (Palmer vii) and Saki's tales, in "highlight[ing] the comic relationship between elemental human nature and the supposed refinements of the allegedly cultivated segment of society," attack, through camp exaggeration, the aunt figure's "traditional matchmaking role, her insistence upon the perpetuation of social forms and heterosexual proliferation of the family, and her ubiquitousness [through campy exaggeration]. . . so that her demolition can be gleefully celebrated" (193-94). The aunt not only embodies a naïve, non-sexual proponent of heterosexuality — she innocently wonders if the boy's "'underlinen is marked'" with his name (67) — but she masks the feral child's predatory and wild sexuality by associating him with God's messenger "Gabriel" while alluding to his sinful sexual message with "Earnest." These are indeed "'nice suitable names'" (67) for the undressed boy, whom the aunt then enlists in the most decorous, socially conventional, and religiously innocent of functions, the "Sunday-school class at tea that afternoon" (68), where, unbeknownst to her, the infants in attendance will tempt the lad. As Palmer points out,

> the aunt never realizes the truth about nature, but constructs her own fictional veneer to clothe or cover up the way things are. . . . With these sexual avoidances and cover-ups, she attempts to clothe the raw sexuality of the wild wolf-boy, trying to draw him into her scheme of civilized religion, but at the first opportunity, he makes off with a child. Saki revels not only in the failed attempt at civilization, but in the continued Victorian ignorance and self-deception that enables the wolf-boy to remain a hero while ravishing his prey. The aunt--Victorian religion and heterosexual convention-bound society--has been overcome by the wily young man in her charge. (202)

Van Cheele has been bombarded with clues about the youth's voracious and deviant appetite, from the boy's own words and sinister effect on Van Cheele to the boy's presence frightening away his spaniel and "his uncanniness in Van Cheele's eyes" (67). Yet the wilfully blind Van Cheele only sees the truth when Cunningham tells him that he saw the lycanthropic lad metamorphose as the sun set. When Van Cheele finally realizes that the foundling is a werewolf, he knows that he will eat one of the children but that his aunt cannot be warned, as she will think "'Gabriel-Ernest is a werewolf' . . .was a code message to which he had omitted to give her the key'" (68). Saki's sly metatextual joke here is that, in pretending to deny it, he is telling the knowing reader that the ephebic carnivore's lycanthropic nature *is* a coded message — for his actual homosexuality, to which Saki offers the reader many keys, not least of which is Van Cheele's own repression and avoidance of the truth. Van Cheele, like the typical 1909 middle- and upper-class reader of *The Westminster Gazette*, ignores the obvious implication of this boy's natural yet deviant, voracious appetite for younger males or, like the aunt, is not yet capable of accepting the truth. Van Cheele's and the Edwardian reader's willing ignorance and supposedly non-sexual appreciation of an aestheticized nude male allow male homosexuality to flourish under the cover of darkness, just as Gabriel-Ernest ultimately eludes Van Cheele's capture, escorting one of the Toop children home at dusk, transforming into a werewolf, eating the infant, and vanishing from the narrative, remaining a free threat beyond the text.

Furthermore, although Van Cheele eventually realizes Gabriel-Ernest's lycanthropy, he covers up the truth, saying that his clothes must have been left behind when he jumped in to save the Toop child, who fell into the river; the pair then drowned. The pious, conventional, marriage-promoting aunt figure "sincerely mourned her lost foundling" and goes so far as to have

> a memorial brass . . . put up in the parish church to 'Gabriel-Ernest, an unknown boy, who bravely sacrificed his life for another.'
>
> Van Cheele gave way to his aunt in most things, but he flatly refused to subscribe to the Gabriel-Ernest memorial. (69)

Thus, while Van Cheele realizes his beastliness, the aunt unwittingly endorses her seemingly innocent boy's deviance, even memorializing him in a place of worship as a hero, all the while never realizing, in Saki's post-Wildean camp, the vital importance of being Gabriel-Ernest. Saki concludes his cleverly impious, cheekily perverse allegory with the aunt's, church's, and decent middle- and upper-class society's sanctioning, even lionizing, of a lad whose sexual, cannibalistic love for younger males would, if revealed, appal and threaten the matrimony-promoting aunt figure, the homosexuality-condemning church, and the sexually repressed or repressive bourgeois reader. In this naughty allegory, then, the physical, moral, and sexual deviance (from the hetero-social norm) of the beastly youth is blindly supported by heteronormative society, while Gabriel-Ernest himself survives, unscathed and untamed by conformist, conservative Edwardian society.

When Gabriel-Ernest changes, he becomes a beastly human, a sexual predator whom culture cannot control, and yet he not only eludes capture and understanding, but the very same civilization he would ordinarily horrify as a savage cannibal in fact endorses him as a heroic, brave figure. Gabriel-Ernest is unclassifiable because he is natural and wild, existing outside society and thus outside class. Without clothes or money, he has no markers of social status. He is not civilized, but a beast, "a brutal person" or, informally, "an objectionable or unpleasant person or thing"; having "the beast" within one means possessing "a human being's brutish or uncivilized characteristics" ("Beast," defs. 2a, 2b, 3). "Beastly" is variously defined as "objectionable, unpleasant" or "like a beast; brutal" (defs. 1, 2). Pre-Wilde, homosexuality was understood as "sodomy," a label "deriving from canon law that referred exclusively to a particular kind of sexual act whether 'committed with mankind or beast'" (Cohen, "Legislating the Norm" 171). In Edwardian times, few people in England were considered more "objectionable or unpleasant" in nature, especially in the wake of Wilde's trial, than homosexuals, who were associated with upper-class dandyism, decadence and sexual excess. Indeed, Victorian "prudishness was . . . a specifically middle-class phenomenon; an assertion of moral and social respectability against a decadent aristocracy" in an increasingly urbanized society that put "a new bourgeois stress on domestic privacy" (Walters 229) at a time when, with the failures of the Boer War, anxieties about the degeneration and effeminacy of the British male were gaining wide currency.[56] The nude, animalistic Gabriel-Ernest, however, existing outside of class, is not associated with the kind of decadent effeminacy embodied by Reginald, Clovis, or even Van Cheele, and if homosexuals' lust was beastly, it was then also, Saki suggests, wild, unconquerable, and natural, in stark opposition to the general view at the time of the homosexual as "a type of man . . . who negated normal 'sexual instinct,' while . . . [the heterosexual] confirm[ed] the 'naturalness' of the sexual norm" (Cohen, "Legislating the Norm" 171).[57] The phrase "the nature of the beast" means "the undesirable but unchangeable inherent or essential quality or character of the thing" (see "Beast," defined phrase/idiom) and certainly Gabriel-Ernest, at home in the wild and at ease with his nature, unleashes his true essence, his sexual identity, when he metamorphoses as the sun sets.[58] Gabriel-Ernest is described as a "wild beast" four times and as "strange" or some variation thereof three times. The recurrence of the word "strange" in the story may also be suggestive of Gabriel-Ernest as sexually unorthodox, for another word for strange is "queer," which had also taken on the added meaning in the *OED*, by 1922, of "homosexual," though the word may well have been used in that slang sense long before it appeared in the dictionary.[59]

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[56] Alison Smith, in *The Victorian Nude: Sexuality, Morality, and Art*, notes the "homophobia which became particularly pronounced within sections of the lower-middle and working classes" in the late nineteenth century and writes that, according to Elaine Showalter's *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (1991), the "cult of the decadent" was seen by conservatives as "an instrument of cultural degeneracy" (182). The Criminal Law Amendment Act, passed in 1885, "had a clear anti-aristocratic bias, the clause against homosexuality being very much an attack on the debasement of youth by 'upper-class profligates'" (Smith 219).

In Saki's fiction, "beastliness" means active rebellion and natural expression, not regression or immorality, and in "Gabriel-Ernest," Saki's juxtaposition of the classless, naturally same-sexual boy with the high-born, cultured Van Cheele and his proper, heterosexuality-promoting aunt generates the uniquely Saki-esque campy tension in the story. Gabriel-Ernest's nudity and homosexuality is first shown outdoors and not in an urbane city setting, the typical milieu of campy gay culture.[60] Susan Sontag observes that "most campy objects are urban" (279), although she also points out that much camp has "a serenity—or a naïveté—which is the equivalent of pastoral" (279). Saki evokes an initially naïve campiness by presenting a seemingly simple, romantic notion of rural England, then twists the stereotypically bucolic British countryside into a home to the sinister and threatening while coupling the savage, woods-dwelling Gabriel-Ernest with the aristocratic, estate-owning sophisticate Van Cheele (the narrator clearly aligns him with the city when he notes that the "cab which he chartered . . . bore him with what seemed exasperating slowness along the country roads" [68]). The friction of wild, unruly nature and decorous, civilized urbanity, added to the necessary spark of camp's simultaneous juxtaposition and revaluation of conventional social attitudes, further fuels the Saki-esque campiness of the story, as most obviously revealed in the boy's threat to enter the aristocrat's home — he assumes Van Cheele would rather "have him" outside — and thus sexually transgress and taint the strict bounds of urban, heterosexual, middle- and upper-class society:

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[58] Cohen notes that Alan Bray, in *Homosexuality in Renaissance England*, "suggests that [sodomy] retained a 'mythic' association which often placed it in the company of werewolfs, basilisks, sorcerers, and heretics" (*Talk on the Wilde Side* 107), while Dionysus was "said to practice or shown practicing pederasty" in ancient Greece (Percy III 48). According to one writer,

> The image of the werewolf has many resonances with initiatory homosexuality – such as the Wolf (Erastes) – Lamb (Eromenes) initiatory relationship in some areas of Greece; [sic] the initiatory trial of "living like a werewolf" in ancient Sparta, and the unrestrained sexual behaviour of the lupari – the wolf priests of the Roman Lupercalia. (Hine)

Irving notes that, in an "Arcadian werewolf custom" that Pliny describes in *Naturalis Historia* and which could have suggested elements of "Gabriel-Ernest" to Munro/Saki, "a man from a certain family is chosen by lot and led to a pond; he hangs his clothes on an oak tree, swims across, and becomes a wolf. If he avoids human flesh for eight years he can swim back and become a man again" (54). See also Irving 54-57.

In recent years, movies such as *The Wolves of Kromer* (2000) and *Cursed* (2005) use lycanthropy as a metaphor for homosexuality, while the screen adaptation of *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (2004) has

> one odd bit at the end when Harry discovers Professor R. J. "Wolfman" Lupin packing his bags. "No one wants, well, people like me, [sic] teaching their children," he explains. The equating of lycanthropy and homosexuality [as pedophilia] is pretty direct here . . . (Vanneman)

The twenty-first century film links lycanthropy with a deviant threat that must capitulate to a society which confuses homosexuality with pedophilia and condemns Lupin's sexuality as unnatural, whereas the 1909 story shows Gabriel-Ernest's shape-shifting and murderous hunger as uncontrollable, natural, and beyond the bounds of moral judgment and social regulation. For discussion of the various ways in which horror films have linked lycanthropy to homosexuality, see Harry M. Benshoff's *Monsters in the Closet: Homosexuality and the Horror Film* (New York: St Martin's, 1997), especially pp. 150-57.

[59] See *OED*, "Queer," def. *a.*^{1}, 1. b., where the earliest citation of "queer" as such is attributed to an American government document, while the first textual reference to "queer" as a noun meaning "homosexual" is from an article by W. H. Auden in 1932 ("Queer," def. *sb.*^{2} *slang*.).

> "I fancy you'd rather have me here than in your house," said the boy.
>
> The prospect of this wild, nude animal in Van Cheele's primly ordered house was certainly an alarming one. (65)

"Gabriel-Ernest," with its "wild, nude animal" anti-hero soon reposing regally in a bourgeois dining-room, is much more daringly campy and homoerotic than Wilde's *The*

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[60] The alignment of the boy in "Gabriel-Ernest" with nature also suggests his effeminacy, for women were (and often still are) typically associated with irrational, passive nature in art and literature, and men aligned with sophisticated, active culture. Yet nature can also be masculine and aggressive ("red in tooth and claw") and women the domesticated products of culture. Straddling all these worlds, Gabriel-Ernest is an energetic, uncontrollable manifestation of nature rebelling against powerless, repressive culture in the form of Cunningham and Van Cheele. See Saunders 91-95 for further discussion of the nature : culture dichotomy in art.

Importance of Being Earnest. Indeed, as camp was, even more so at the turn of the nineteenth century than now, "marginal to the world that reveres industry, progress, convention, marriage and respectability—all things that traditionally have been upheld by the bourgeois male" (Booth 54), so Saki's nature-based opposition to and subversion of all these urban-associated values in "Gabriel-Ernest" is a campy questioning of Wildean camp. "Gabriel-Ernest" exhibits and further exaggerates Jack Babuscio's four features of camp (irony, aestheticism, theatricality, and humour) through Saki's macabre use of the naturally savage outsider figure who, unlike Wilde's still socially accepted, insider-outsider figures, exists outside cultured society while exposing its hypocrisies; thus the story's irony is both amusing and fatal, its aestheticism can be found in its outdoor landscapes, not an urban setting, its theatricality is knowingly arch in a post-Wilde era, and the humour in "Gabriel-Ernest" quickly turns black and bloody. Saki coyly alludes to the impossibility of discussing homosexuality in a post-Wilde England when Van Cheele notes that the wolfish lad shouldn't talk about devouring young boys because "Such dreadful things should not be said even in fun" (66). Gabriel-Ernest embodies sexual metamorphosis, but his ravenous blood-lust for little boys is a secret that cannot be revealed, much as homosexuality must remain hidden at the time; thus the lad's "appetite is too savage to be described or even witnessed by any other character" (Stern 284). Saki's, and Gabriel-Ernest's, dissident triumph in the story lies beneath its dependence on the reader's subscription to aestheticized, traditionally acceptable images of naked boys (as associated with Greek myth and artistic poses) to mask the homoerotic as merely grotesque and Gothic, and its veiling of a sexually transgressive and threatening sexuality behind the ostensibly macabre and supernatural.

"Gabriel-Ernest" is also slyly self-referential, as Saki lightly mocks the Reginald dandy character of his earlier stories. Van Cheele is nominally the "Dandy Wit . . . urbane, detached, sardonic and poised. Economically secure, he is usually an aristocrat" (Booth 125). Reginald is both Dandy Wit and another type explicated by Booth, the perpetually young "Beautiful Boy" (e.g. Dorian Gray), but in "Gabriel-Ernest" Van Cheele, the Dandy Wit, doesn't clue in to his own sexual fascination with the wild lad, is often stuck for words, and fails to act. It is Gabriel-Ernest, the Beautiful Boy, who sates his lust for child-flesh and lingers in the reader's mind. Simultaneously, as Lane explains, beastly humans and wild creatures "fulfill the private dreams of cruelty that [Saki's] 'civilized' protagonists must repress" (217) and indeed violently express the repressed homo- or asexuality that someone like Van Cheele hides.

Of course, as Langguth notes (160), there would have been a minority of readers for whom the queer nature of the story was, as always with camp, a sly in-joke, a brotherly wink and supportive nod to their secret sexualities. Yet the majority of readers (straight, repressed, or otherwise) who would have read, likely misunderstood, and been thrilled by "Gabriel-Ernest" when it appeared in *The Westminster Gazette* were people who were holding the very middle- and upper-class, heterosexual and religious values that Saki so cleverly undermines with his wolf-boy's triumph. Indeed, it is another respectable, conservative, bourgeois paper with which Van Cheele hastily covers Gabriel-Ernest so that his aunt will not be shocked as she enters the morning-room: "And with a view to minimizing that catastrophe Van Cheele hastily obscured as much of his unwelcome guest as possible under the folds of a *Morning Post*" (67). Soon Van Cheele is, in an action suggesting his own frantic cover-up of a perverse fascination with the nude boy, "making frantic little grabs at the *Morning Post* to keep it in its place" (67).

Saki's lewd pun, which suggests the tumescence — "that unwelcome guest" — which can welcome men when they arise in the morning, not only pops up here to poke fun at a heteronormative, bourgeois newspaper readership, but winks knowingly at Saki's journalistic persona in the reference to a paper for which Munro was a correspondent for six years.[61] Gabriel-Ernest is, like Munro/Saki, a figure split in two (at least) and this story acknowledges that with the allusion to the *Morning Post.* Munro's and Saki's newspaper articles and stories were dependent on and directed at a bourgeois, conservative readership and it was precisely the "civilized," pious, heteronormative values held by such an audience that Saki likes to undermine in his dissident satires. This daring, sexually transgressive story offers a tantalizing parallel between this "unknown boy" and Hector Hugh Munro, whose private world remained unknown but who, when he transformed into his satirical alter ego Saki, savaged the conventional, bourgeois

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[61] I disagree with Lane's assertion that the irony and performativity of Saki's writing "disbands his identity's permanence" and that each story or character is a fresh "impersonation" that "casts doubt on the authority behind or beneath its utterance" (213-14). Saki's writing did not remake itself with each story or, before 1913, undermine his narrative voice, although the nature of Saki's camp clearly evolved from the Reginald stories to "Gabriel-Ernest" and "The Music on the Hill." The author-narrator of these stories is already an (im)persona(tion) whose consistent writing style between 1904 and 1912, recurring themes, and distinctly ironic, playful voice and style unify his identity, authority, and authorship. I also take issue with Stern's claim that Saki's "'attitude' — the stance of the beautiful young man who parades his charms while remaining disdainfully oblivious of his audience" (282) — is, essentially, self-engrossed. Stern's analysis applies to Saki's Reginald stories, with their epigrammatic, verbal show-off style and a narcissistic character, but particularly after these stories the author-narrator's tone does not imply that he is merely showing off his wit (a sort of self- or, as it is the persona of Saki, split self-sexuality) and/or keeping his audience at a distance while he expresses veiled homoerotic desire for his characters (same-sexuality). References to the *Morning Post* in "Gabriel-Ernest" and to London baths which Munro likely frequented in "The Recessional" and "Shock Tactics" suggest, at the least, an acknowledgement of Munro in the stories by Saki (if not Munro's own homosexual desires as obliquely expressed through Saki, as Langguth argues), while many stories (including the Reginald pieces) necessarily call on the reader to understand, and thus to some extent participate in, their satires and discussions of contemporary art, politics, or other concerns of the time. "Gabriel-Ernest," in fact, marks a greater dissident shift (not a fresh take or new impersonation) in Saki's narrative "attitude" as his friendly, insider approach to the reader masks the subtextual joke that he is playing on the typically bourgeois, straight reader who would not understand the truth of the wolf-boy's savage appetite.

Edwardian world with ink-stained claws. Saki, who preyed on his readers' blind allegiances to their class, religion, and sexuality with his undercurrents of class defeat, religious failures, and asexual or homosexual relations, likely reflected the rebel lurking within the Hector Hugh Munro who lived quietly in Edwardian London. As Lane suggests, the name "Gabriel-Ernest" "captures [the] tension between binding and diffusion" (215) in the conflict of Munro-Saki, torn between adopting the values of the proper, decorous Edwardian bourgeois milieu in which Munro lived and worked, and attacking that same world on which Saki depended for his satire, which subtly tried to undermine and strip away the repressed and "civilized" layers of Edwardian society.

Just as the ostensibly civil, proper, and upstanding citizen Van Cheele is strangely fascinated by the nude boy in his woods (who knows his "place"/sexuality while the land-owner truly does not), Munro/Saki may have been "harbouring a personality of such doubtful repute" (66) at the time. Munro's private sexuality may well be hinted at in Saki's interest in adolescent boys, as voiced by Reginald's, Clovis's, and Comus's own interest in young men. In sharp opposition to the "Purity Campaign" begun in the 1880s to "eliminate adolescent sexuality" (Hyam 65) and which Baden-Powell's Boy Scouts movement, in the first decade of the twentieth-century, continued in its own way, homosexuality was, in "much twentieth-century writing . . . seen as an adolescent phase" (Bristow 85); Uranian and other homoerotic-themed works of literature in the Edwardian era showed gay desire in a pubescent world, often that of private schools (see D'Arch Smith and Bristow 83-86). Such desire is most obviously gilded with homoeroticism in "Gabriel-Ernest," where the strange boy's appetite for devouring other boys may, through the looking-glass of literary satire, refract and reflect the private H. H. Munro's possible homosexual taste for younger lovers.

In 1911, Munro and A. Rothay Reynolds hosted a party for Vaslav Nijinsky and Diaghilev's Russian ballet in 1911 (Langguth 180-81); the troupe's performances of such Pan-like works as *L'Après-midi d'un faune* (Dingley 47) were often transgressively homoerotic — Booth notes that not only was Nijinsky a "camp [fad or] fancy" (17) but that, "in the twentieth century, the man most involved in spreading the camp taste for the exotic was Diaghilev" (141) — while the first of Saki's *The Bystander* comic interview pieces, "Heart-to-Heart Talks," is an imagined conversation between Nijinsky and the parliament's Liberal whip. Ethel notes the party in her memoir but, if it was any indication that her brother was homosexual, she was either blind to the possibility or repressed the idea. The unmarried and apparently unamorous Ethel may not have been concerned with such things; after all, she seemed blind to the campiness and homoeroticism in her brother's stories: "Ethel Munro assured a correspondent that the lack of romance was not due to absent-mindedness on her brother's part. 'One subject he never wrote on, was sex, and I am certain if he had, he would have made fun of it. The only way to treat it!'" (Langguth 53; quotation from letter to Spears in the appendix to *The Satire of Saki*) Carey, however, notes:

> Whether Ethel understood her brother's sexual nature is not clear. In her biography she talks of him 'chumming' with various young men in London and on his forays abroad, as if it were boyish comradeship with no sexual content. On the other hand, she destroyed most of his letters soon after receiving them, which suggests she knew there was something to hide. (xiii)

The suspicion remains that Ethel destroyed some of her brother's correspondence because certain letters hinted at his homosexuality. In his biography Langguth claims, without substantiation, that Munro, while in Davos with his family circa 1889, visited the openly gay writer John Addington Symonds (the anonymous subject in Havelock Ellis's 1890s study of a homosexual man, "Case XVIII" in *Sexual Inversion*); certainly Saki was writing homoerotic, campy stories only a few decades after Gide was printing private, unsigned editions of gay writing and after

> Symonds composed *A Problem of Greek Ethics* in 1873 . . . not until 1883 . . . did he print it privately, and then in an edition of only ten copies. He took such care in limiting to whom he lent and gave copies that in 1892—nine years after the printing—he could give Edward Carpenter one. Despite such careful control, Symonds did not feel comfortable alluding to his own case and on the title page insists that his 'inquiry into the phenomenon of sexual inversion' be 'addressed especially to medical psychiatrists and jurists.' In 1891, when Symonds printed *A Problem of Modern Ethics*, the edition of fifty copies still was addressed to doctors and judges . . . (Bergman 97-98)

Van Cheele's cover-up of Gabriel-Ernest's true nature is in keeping with homosexuals' concealment of their sexual orientation at the time, and blackmail is a serious threat to adults in six of Saki's stories[62]: "Before the Second World War, gay writers went to extreme lengths to control their audience and avoid explicitly identifying themselves or their readers as homosexual. They did so, of course, to avoid blackmail, social stigma, and imprisonment" (97). As Carey notes, "Caution was vital. The Oscar Wilde scandal was still fresh in the public mind. . . . In dress and behaviour Hector was always careful to appear the model English gentleman, with no trace of dandyism or foppery" (xiii), and if, as Sinfield argues, the "Wildean model produced . . . the queer – dandified, aesthetic, effeminate," a leisure-class homosexual who was unacceptable to the public (122), then

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[62] See "The Innocence of Reginald" (*WG*, April 6, 1904), "Mrs. Packletide's Tiger," "The Treasure-Ship" (*MP*, February 20, 1912), "The Disappearance of Crispina Umberleigh," "The Penance" (*WG*, September 24, 1910), and "Hyacinth." Children blackmail adults to less serious effect in "The Boar-Pig" (*MP*, August 20, 1912) and "The Lumber-Room" (*MP*, October 14, 1913), and a cat extorts humans in "Tobermory" (*WG*, November 27, 1909).

Munro was prudent to come out of the wardrobe discreetly, if indeed he dressed cautiously in public.[63] The persona of Saki may have been a simultaneous cloaking and baring of Munro's homosexuality. Van Cheele may represent the repressed homosexual gentleman in Edwardian England whose strange, suppressed attraction is exposed by Gabriel-Ernest; Van Cheele masks the truth about himself and the queer nature of the erotic lad, and he refuses to subscribe to the memorial for the boy. Saki's story slyly mocks Van Cheele's naïveté and repression and, by proxy, the wilful ignorance of the Edwardian reader, but just as the naked boy metamorphoses from an innocent, alluring youth into a demonized sexual predator, did Hector Hugh Munro use the mask of Saki to publicly hint at the unacceptably queer nature of his sexuality? In that sly, tantalizing instance of metafiction and self-reference, Saki has Van Cheele cover up the feral, erotic boy with the very paper that "H. H. Munro" was writing for as a European correspondent only a year before publishing "Gabriel-Ernest." Munro's sexuality, hidden beneath the respectable newsprint of his European reports for a conservative paper, is allegorically voiced by his literary persona in another respectable paper, *The Westminster Gazette*, whose bourgeois and upper-class readers would no doubt miss the reference, and thus allow Van Cheele to make his "frantic little grabs at the *Morning Post* to keep it in its place" (67), leaving the nature of correspondent Munro's love concealed. Just as Gabriel-Ernest survives, unrecognized, untamed, and not captured by conformist, conservative Edwardian society, so does Munro/Saki, slipping into the wild undergrowth of his metaphorical narrative and savage camp, subscribe to his own memorial and seem to reveal his true 'nature' for just a few elusive and allusive pages. When Van Cheele discovers the wild boy in his house, he worries that he will "add inconvenient candour to his other savage propensities" (67), but the boy's savage propensity already confesses the boy's true nature — an unorthodox sexuality which Saki's mixture of camp and Ovidian metamorphosis shows to be fiercely natural, an active, ever-roving and lurking alternative masculinity that can't be pinned down and is constantly 'de-camping' itself and metamorphosing. Two years later, Saki's camp would transform itself yet again with a wildly different, yet strangely familiar tale involving an Arcadian British countryside, a faun-like boy, and violent, pagan nature.

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[63] I have been unable to find the source for Carey's claim that Munro took care to not appear foppish or dandy-like in public. Langguth mentions what Munro may have worn by describing a typical 1909 outfit (157) but there are not, to my knowledge, any reliable descriptions of Munro's wardrobe. A 1908 picture and the Hoppé photograph (circa 1911), both of which are reprinted in Langguth's biography, show Munro wearing similar formal outfits: white shirt with starched collar, tie, waistcoat, and jacket.

SYLV(I)AN HILLS

In "The Music on the Hill," which did not appear in a newspaper (perhaps because of its risqué undercurrents; see also the "Acknowledgment" quoted in my prefatory note to Appendix Six) before inclusion in *The Chronicles of Clovis* (circa August 1911), the realization of Mortimer's sexual self-sufficiency is bloodily driven home to his wife by a vengeful Pan-figure. The tale surpasses "Gabriel-Ernest" by launching its attack on heteronormative society from within its supposedly solid, safe, validating institution — holy matrimony.[64] "The Music on the Hill" begins with Sylvia Seltoun relishing her latest triumph:

> To have married Mortimer Seltoun, "Dead Mortimer" as his more intimate enemies called him, in the teeth of the cold hostility of his family, and in spite of his unaffected indifference to women, was indeed an achievement that had needed some determination and adroitness to carry through; yesterday she had brought

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[64] Stern suggests, going along with Langguth's conjecture that Munro had many homosexual trysts while a travelling correspondent, that Saki dealt most explicitly with unorthodox sexualities in "Gabriel-Ernest" and "The Music on the Hill" because "both stories were written comparatively shortly after his return from abroad" (Notes, 295).

> her victory to its concluding stage by wrenching her husband away from Town and its group of satellite watering-places and "settling him down," in the vocabulary of her kind, in this remote wood-girt manor which was his country house. (161)

Here is a woman whose great triumph comes with heterosexual marriage, with taming a deadened man (for emphasis, Saki calls him "Mortimer," which includes "mort," French for "death") and removing him to the country so that her marriage project can be completed on her terms. Mortimer, for his part, has an "unaffected indifference to women," which could apply equally to the dandies Reginald and Clovis or to a gay man (and may explain his family's knowing hostility to Sylvia's matrimonial efforts); Mortimer, perhaps depressed or burdened by a sexuality that he must keep secret, has frequented pubs in the city. But Sylvia, thinking an isolated house in the country is a good haven in which to "settle down" with her reluctant husband, is unaware of the natural, homoerotic, pagan threats to heterosexuality that lurk in Saki's woodlands and cast a "'spell'" over Mortimer (161). In this homoerotic, misogynist story, a taming, shrewish heterosexual culture, in which a wife is trying to control a disinterested man, will be conquered by wild, passionate, self- or same-sexual nature, and Mortimer will be brought to life by his wife's death.

Sylvia, whose name ironically evokes "sylvan," brings about her own doom by isolating herself with Mortimer in the "sombre almost savage wildness about Yessney that was certainly not likely to appeal to town-bred tastes," no matter how much Sylvia foolishly romanticizes the rural landscape (161). Her underestimation of both indifferent Mortimer and harsh nature, borne of a haughty woman confident in her marital victory, will prove her undoing, as Saki subtly suggests throughout the opening of "The Music on the Hill." While the narrator describes the "wild open savagery" of the couple's environs, where "there seemed a stealthy linking of the joy of life with the terror of unseen things" (162), ignorant Sylvia merely

> smiled complacently as she gazed with a School-of-Art appreciation at the landscape, and then of a sudden she almost shuddered.
>
> "It is very wild," she said to Mortimer, who had joined her; "one could almost think that in such a place the worship of Pan had never quite died out."
>
> "The worship of Pan never has died out," said Mortimer. "Other newer gods have drawn aside his votaries from time to time, but he is the Nature-God to whom all must come back at last. He has been called the Father of all the Gods, but most of his children have been stillborn."
>
> Sylvia was religious in an honest, vaguely devotional kind of way, and did not like to hear her beliefs spoken of as mere aftergrowths, but it was at least something new and hopeful to hear Dead Mortimer speak with such energy and conviction on any subject.
>
> 'You don't really believe in Pan?' she asked incredulously.
>
> 'I've been a fool in most things,' said Mortimer quietly, but I'm not such a fool as not to believe in Pan when I'm down here. And if you're wise you won't disbelieve in him too boastfully while you're in his country.' (162)

Saki has already established Sylvia's boastfulness at the outset; her smugness and complacency mark her as a typical victim of Saki's fatal comeuppances. Yet Sylvia particularly needs to die, Saki suggests, for trying to tame a non-heterosexual man and for refusing to realize that the worship of Pan pre-existed Sylvia's own religion, a self-satisfied, heteronormative Christianity that foolishly ignores other sexualities and beliefs, and is associated with aunts or possessive women who stifle and threaten free male sexual expression (see "Gabriel-Ernest" and "Reginald's Choir Treat"). Male-centred, self-sexual or homoerotic Pantheism (uninterested in fertility or reproduction, hence "'most of his children have been stillborn'") dominates and attacks the "aftergrowth" of feminized, urban Christianity in a truly wild, free, natural setting, lending hope and energy to the oft-restricted Mortimers of the world.

Sylvia is soon haunted by the sense that an ominous presence is watching her. Farm animals avoid her, except for one large sow which seems aggressive; as she departs the scene, making "her way past rickyards and cowsheds and long blank walls, she started suddenly at a strange sound—the echo of a boy's laughter, golden and equivocal. . . . The memory of that untraceable echo was added to her other impressions of a furtive sinister 'something' that hung around Yessney" (163). The laughter seems to represent the boy himself who, like Gabriel-Ernest, is described by Saki the narrator as "golden" or fair, almost perfectly youthful, and "equivocal," or shifty and mysterious in some way. There is an alluring strangeness to the lad, then, perhaps the same aura that surrounded Mortimer and oddly attracted Sylvia to him; certainly Mortimer shows no interest in his relationship with Sylvia and aligns himself with this eerie natural presence, this youthful, curious sexuality hidden in the undergrowth:

> Of Mortimer she saw very little; farm and woods and trout-streams seemed to swallow him up from dawn till dusk. Once, following the direction she had seen him take in the morning, she came to an open space in a nut copse, further shut in by huge yew trees, in the centre of which stood a stone pedestal surrounded by a small bronze figure of a youthful Pan. It was a beautiful piece of workmanship, but her attention was chiefly held by the fact that a newly cut bunch of grapes had been placed as an offering at its feet. Grapes were none too plentiful at the manor house, and Sylvia snatched the bunch angrily away from the pedestal. Contemptuous annoyance dominated her thoughts as she strolled slowly homeward, and then gave way to a sharp feeling of something that was very near fright; across a thick tangle of undergrowth a boy's face was scowling at her, brown and beautiful, with unutterably evil eyes. . . . It was not until she had reached the house that she discovered she had dropped the bunch of grapes in her flight. (163)

Mortimer has turned to Pan and the wild to rediscover his true sexual nature, offering grapes to the statue of a youthful nature-god; the impious trespasser's removal of the fruit (the grapes also suggest Bacchus, the wine-god) shows her pettiness, narrow pragmatism and, most important, Sylvia's utter incomprehension and denial of alternative beliefs or sexualities which, when they briefly confront her heresy in the form of a Beautiful Boy's face, threaten her simply by being unknown, unproductive, and foolish. When Sylvia talks to her husband about the encounter, she dismisses the boy as a gipsy, equating a maligned sexuality with a maligned ethnicity. She has guessed that Mortimer placed the grapes at the pagan altar without fully understanding why and she thinks it "'a harmless piece of lunacy, but people would think you dreadfully silly if they knew of it'," unable to counter Mortimer's belief without feebly resorting to heterosocial, middle-class notions of propriety and decorum (164). Mortimer has fully embraced the homosocial and homoerotic paganism that Sylvia thinks is irrational and he warns her that "'the Wood Gods are rather horrible to those who molest them'" (164), suggesting that Sylvia avoid the woods and animals, especially those with horns. Sylvia's bourgeois, urban certainties and faiths have been shaken: "It was all nonsense, of course, but in that lonely wood-girt spot nonsense seemed able to rear a bastard brood of uneasiness" (164). Saki's use of sexual language here makes the story more violently homoerotic: the heretical woman has not just trespassed on the domain of, but "molested" the boyish Pan, and homosexual Paganism can somehow raise an illegitimate clutch of "uneasiness" that preys on the childless (and sexually frigid or neglected) Sylvia, who even imaginatively "unsexed the most matronly dairy cows and turned them into bulls liable to 'see red' at any moment" (164). Mortimer menacingly tells his alarmed wife that "'I don't think you will ever go back to Town,'" inverting his knowing "mother's prediction as to himself" (164) that "'if he once goes [to Yessney] he'll stay'" (161). The male-love paganism that attracts Mortimer repulses Sylvia; thus self- or same-sexuality is dialectically opposed to heterosexuality in the story and even the setting of "Yessney" suggests this interwoven contrariness, with its internal contradiction of "yes" and "nay".

The very indifference and unappreciativeness of nature that the London wit Oscar Wilde so disliked (see quotation at the beginning of this chapter) is what Saki always takes as the starting-point of the many stories he sets in the wild. At the least, animals' distinction from and indifference to humans reveal just how uptight and socially conscious bourgeois or upper-class Edwardians are, while in other Saki stories, nature's "doubtful neutrality" (164), as Sylvia sees it, becomes cold, sinister, or fatal to the non-believer. In "The Music on the Hill," Sylvia the country-romantic yet urban skeptic ironically becomes part of nature as she is hunted by an agent of Pan:

> A low, fitful piping, as of some reedy flute, was coming from the depth of a neighbouring copse, and there seemed to be some subtle connection between the animal's restless pacing and the wild music from the wood. . . . She had left the piping notes behind her, but across the wooded combes at her feet the wind brought her another kind of music, the straining bay of hounds in full chase. . . . the hunted deer sometimes came that way. . . . she grew tense with the excited sympathy that one feels for any hunted thing in whose capture one is not directly interested. . . . [it was] a fat September stag carrying a well-furnished head. . . . the music of the pack seemed to have died away for a moment, and in its place she heard again that wild piping, which rose now on this side, now on that, as though urging the falling stag to a final effort. . . . The pipe music shrilled suddenly around her, seeming to come from the bushes at her very feet, and at the same moment the great beast slewed round and bore directly down upon her. In an instant her pity for the poor animal changed to wild terror at her own danger; the thick heather roots mocked her scrambling efforts at flight, and she looked frantically downward for a glimpse of oncoming hounds. The huge antler spikes were within a few yards of her, and in a flash of numbing fear she remembered Mortimer's warning, to beware of horned beasts on the farm. And then with a quick throb of joy she saw that she was not alone; a human figure stood a few paces aside, knee-deep in the whortle bushes.
>
> 'Drive it off!' she shrieked. But the figure made no answering movement.
>
> The antlers drove straight at her breast, the acrid smell of the animal was in her nostrils, but her eyes were filled with the horror of something she saw other than her oncoming death. And in her ears rang the echo of a boy's laughter, golden and equivocal. (165-66)

In "Gabriel-Ernest" and now here again, Saki shows self- or same-sexuality as related to paganism and Pan, and as not just natural, but wild and savage. The danger here is that, to take it a step further, Saki shows homosexuality to be what many, post-Wilde, thought it was (and many still think it to be) — a murderous, predatory threat, that "horror of something [Sylvia] saw other than her oncoming death." The young werewolf in "Gabriel-Ernest" devours children, while in "The Music on the Hill" Pan leads a stag to kill Sylvia for her denial of him and, by implication, Mortimer's disinterest in women. The beautiful, golden, young Pan becomes a misogynistic Nemesis as he murders a woman for trying to tame a man who is, at the least, asexual. The pipe and the haunting refrain of the triumphant "boy's laughter, golden and equivocal," mark the figure out as Pan, while Sylvia supplicates Pan at last in a desperate effort to save herself, but the entire scene is most interesting in its revision of the myth of Actaeon, best retold in the Roman poet Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Book III.[65] Actaeon sees Diana bathing naked and the goddess turns him into a stag who is ripped apart by his own hounds (61-64). In Saki's version, it is Sylvia who violates Pan's sanctity by removing the grapes, while the stag is used by Pan to kill her as the hounds fail to appear. The stag's horns notably gore Sylvia's "breast," home to both her deluded heart and her breasts (markers of both her gender and maternal potential) and so Sylvia, whose marriage in life seemed to be sexless, is finally penetrated in death, but by Mortimer's same-sexual, avenging god. Sylvia's fatal punishment for her ignorance of her husband's true nature, and her refusal to listen to his indifferent warnings, also reveal the full ominous meaning of Mortimer's name, which combines the feminine French words for "death" and "sea."[66] When Sylvia saw the stag, she had again foolishly trusted that nature, and Mortimer, were on her side: "His obvious course was to drop down to the brown pools of Undercombe, and thence make his way towards the red deer's favoured sanctuary, the sea" (165); but the deadly stag turned from the sea and found Sylvia, its true quarry.

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[65] The story also, though more vaguely, recalls and inverts the myth of Cyparissus, a lover of Apollo who kills his favourite stag one day by accident and, distraught, has the gods turn him into a cypress tree (cf. Ovid, Book X). This classical tale, and that of Narcissus (alluded to in "Gabriel-Ernest") both involve "homosexuality, hunting, and mystical death" (Sergent 98).

[66] Interestingly, for a story so concerned with the trap of a dull life, like many of Saki's tales, and given the animal that kills Sylvia, the French adjective "mort," in connection with "eau" (water), means "*stag*nant."

THE PANIC OF SAKI'S CAMP

While "The Music on the Hill" more obviously pits homosexuality or asexuality against heterosexuality than "Gabriel-Ernest," its camp arises from the burnished alloy of tragedy and comedy in this "golden and equivocal" story. Saki interweaves an exaggerated playful tone with a sinister, violent mood so that these two crucial aspects of the story become inextricably linked. In Mortimer's languid indifference, there is a camp sense of affected boredom, while Pan certainly fits the Beautiful Boy archetype of camp fiction. Here is Saki's particularly sinister brand of camp, an initially innocent-seeming frivolity that turns into a dark, savage, "hidden mockery" (163) lurking in the undergrowth. This mockery stems from a questioning of tame, church-bound, marriage-based heterosexuality through its connection to a homo- or asexual sensibility that remains hidden in wild, pagan nature; thus, in "The Music on the Hill," Sylvia senses a "stealthy linking of the joy of life with the terror of unseen things" (162), "furtive watchful hostility, the same shadow of unseen things that seemed to lurk" (162), the mocking laughter whose "untraceable echo was added to her other impressions of a furtive sinister 'something'" (163), and "a bastard brood of uneasiness" (164). Saki is suggesting, then, that orthodox sexualities depend on unorthodox sexualities, and vice versa, for their definitions and distinctions. While Wilde often inverted binaries such as nature : culture or surface : depth (see Dollimore 14-16) but set his tales in urban environments, Saki uses the seeming indifference of nature to emphasize his camp characters' sexual and moral indifference to social norms and conventions, subtly revaluing the hidden, untamed naturalness of unorthodox sexualities. These sexualities, through their violence, vengeances, and spiritual auras, reveal their power without ever revealing themselves, remaining "golden and equivocal" until the end, just as Saki's narrative style draws the reader in before he or she realizes what they are going along with. Saki's campiness consistently hints at the reality just beneath the surface of things, using the cruelty of a nature inhabited by Pan-figures to strike at the heart of the matter (see Forster quotation at start of chapter), thus alluding to the serious, natural, strong presence of homosexuality within an ostensibly heterosexual world and even beneath the artifice of camp itself. In fact, as Frost argues, if Wilde turned "nature into another pose, Saki's goal is to turn artifice into a product of nature" (*Saki: His Context and Development* 146).

"The Music on the Hill," which seems light and arch at the outset, soon turns dark and vicious; readers, who likely did not side with Sylvia at the start, quickly have their expectations overturned as the story becomes even more antagonistic towards the main character than they expected, and soon they find themselves complicit in her murder. Saki enlists his typically bourgeois, heterosexual reader in killing off the wife who represses Mortimer's true desires, pagan and otherwise — for in camp, as Booth explains, the "male is a sexually ambiguous drone whose recurrent nightmare is that some woman will force him to take liberties with her; he shrinks from the drudgery of marital sex, identifying it with the 'daily grind'" (60)[67] — recruiting his mainstream audience in a rebellion against their own values and expectations.

The heterosexual Pan (see *Metamorphoses*, Books I and XI) seems to have been originally associated, like Bacchus, with inciting hysteria in women, an association with effeminacy that seems to have become aligned with homosexuality in the late nineteenth century. Saki's macabre mixture of paganism and camp is wholly *sui generis*, but paganism was not unusual at the time, often as part of an expression of Britons' ambivalence about the simultaneously idyllic and implacably cruel nature (as in Robert Louis Stevenson's 1878 essay "Pan's Pipes"; even Wilde, around the same time, wrote early poems about nature, Pan, and Ancient Greece, such as "Pan – Double Villanelle" and "Charmides") of the countryside in the face of ongoing industrialization and suburbanization, as Robert Dingley notes (see 50-56). Rose explains that there "was a great deal of pantheistic nature-worship in Edwardian literature—in the poetry of John Masefield, in the writings of Edward Thomas, in George Moore's 1905 novel *The Lake*" (29-30), in "Forrest Reid's Pan-fantasy *The Garden God* (1905)" (66), and in Belloc's *Hills and the Sea* (1906), while J. M. Barrie gave his well-known boy-warrior, created around 1904, "Pan" as a surname. The "higher sodomy [platonic homosexuality] was one more variety of Edwardian surrogate religion" (66) and the "principal deity of this religion was Pan, the premoral nature god who incarnated the Edwardian Id" (89). Robert Cecil notes that the "sly, malicious figure of Pan makes his appearance in the books of several writers of the period, notably . . . Arthur Machen, Richard Le Gallienne and 'Saki'" (129). The homoerotic use of Pan was a literary vein first opened by Walter Pater in "Denys L'Auxerrois" (1887) and "A Story of Dionysus" (1895), which examines how Pan and satyrs are associated with mockery and malice.[68] Carey writes:

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[67] Saki's "The Holy War" (*MP*, May 6, 1913; rediscovered by Langguth) has a similar plot to "The Music on the Hill," but with the paganism replaced by a man's fierce feeling of *genius loci*. Revil Yealmton, returning home to the West Country after two years in Asiatic Russia (the character's name and situation echo *When William Came*, which Saki was writing in 1913 and published in November), is looking forward to seeing his haven of flora and fauna again, but not his wife Thirza, a "managing woman" ("Six Uncollected Stories . . ." 288). Yet he finds that she has drained the pond, got rid of most of the animals, and generally tamed the wildness of the place in his absence. The couple begin a battle over the the property, Revil finds himself wishing Thirza harm, and it is clear whose side the narrator-author is on: "What she did not know, or did not understand, was that Yealmton was fighting a Holy War, and therefore could not be defeated" (291). Yealmton's wish is fulfilled by an injured, wild swan that knocks Thirza into the shallow end of a frozen pond, where she drowns (292).

> Pan makes a personal appearance in Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows*, and E. M. Forster's first published story, *The Story of a Panic* . . . . Pan's goatish associations gave him a particular appeal for exponents of sexual freedom, including homosexuals, who blamed Christianity for emasculating Western culture. (xx-xxi)

Pan, a part-goat and part-man piper who inspired fear and hysteria, is often endowed with devilish horns in modern incarnations (perhaps out of confusion with some depictions of Dionysus) and he gives us the word "panic," as Forster's 1904 story emphasizes. Set in Italy, "The Story of a Panic" concerns Eustace Robinson, a timid, pale, languid 14-year-old boy who, after a man on an expedition to the woods proclaims the nature deity to be dead, blows a whistle to summon Pan. Eustace soon becomes interested in Gennaro, a fishing-boy, hugging him in a "habit of promiscuous intimacy" which the narrator notes

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[68] Pater, in "A Story of Dionysus," discusses Pan thus:

> Quite different from them in origin and intent, but confused with them in form, are those other companions of Dionysus, Pan and his children. Home-spun dreams of simple people, and like them in the uneventful tenour [sic] of his existence, he has almost no story; he is but a presence; the *spiritual form* of Arcadia, and the ways of human life there . . . its one adornment and solace being the dance to the homely shepherd's pipe, cut by Pan first from the sedges of the brook Molpeia.
>
> Breathing of remote nature, the sense of which is so profound in the Homeric hymn to Pan, the pines, the foldings of the hills, the leaping streams, the strange echoings and dying of sound on the heights . . . Pan joins the company of the Satyrs. Amongst them, they give their names to insolence and mockery, and the finer sorts of malice, to unmeaning and ridiculous fear. But the best spirits have found in them also a certain human pathos, as in displaced beings, coming even nearer to most men, in their very roughness, than the noble and delicate person of the vine; dubious creatures, half-way between the animal and human kinds, speculating wistfully on their being, because not wholly understanding themselves and their place in nature; as the animals seem always to have this expression to some noticeable degree in the presence of man. (15-16)

"was perfectly intolerable and could only lead to familiarity and mortification for all" (23); the pair's friendship turns tragic when Gennaro tries to free Eustace from a room in which the narrator and others are trying to confine him. They jump to the ground, but Gennaro dies while Eustace runs off, so that "far down the valley towards the sea, there still resounded the shouts and the laughter of the escaping boy" (42). Years before Saki's "Gabriel-Ernest" and "The Music on the Hill," then, Forster uses Pan to express both gaiety and the homosexual love between boys breaking the constraints of the adult world, also ending his tale with the laughter of a sexually free lad roaming in the wild. In Forster's story, the sudden "panic" is more obviously related to the current notion of homosexual panic (that is, a fear of homosexuals usually arising from the fear of being homosexual or somehow tainted with homosexuality oneself), as the narrator and others become increasingly concerned about Pan's instillation of an unnatural love in Eustace.

In Saki's stories, though, homosexual panic is veiled by explicit concerns about a werewolf or murderous Pan and homosexual love does not come from without, a change initiated by a *deus ex natura*, so to speak, but from within, a fundamental spirit. Van Cheele's and Gabriel-Ernest's unorthodox sexualities, or recognition of them, is latent, while Mortimer's true love lies dormant, and it is only "others," beastly humans, skulking in the undergrowth, who witness or expose these males' "other," actual natures. In keeping with the sexological discourses of the time, then, which saw homosexuality as "inborn," Saki's queerer stories show male homosexuality as innate or essential, too, but they also posit self- or same-sexuality as natural, a notion that, though far from being accepted by the courts, politicians, and scientists of the time, was unwittingly being suggested by them. For Saki fiercely expresses in his fiction what, as Foucault notes, legal, psychological, sexological, and other studies indirectly "made possible," that is, "the formation of a 'reverse' discourse: homosexuality began to speak in its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or 'naturality' be acknowledged" (101). By associating a non-heterosexuality with threatening, wild, murderous figures, Saki uses a dark, rural campiness to slyly pose the natural, *necessary* threat of a different, beastly masculinity to a conventional society that already thought of a Wilde sexuality as a destabilizing force. Rose argues that "pantheistic nature-worship" was yet another hopeful ideology of the era (29-30), but Saki uses it as a destructive threat which forcefully stakes out camp-grounds for unorthodox sexualities. While camp "challenge[s] certain bourgeois prejudices concerning the existence of a unified and natural self," as Andrew Smith notes (152), Saki uses it to not merely question heterosexuality as the only unified and natural masculine identity, but to suggest that other male sexualities, whether asexuality, narcissistic desire, homosexuality, or even pederasty, were just as natural, if also threatening to the established order. In this way, Saki moves beyond Wilde's use of camp to question "the idea of the 'natural'" (154); by using Ovidian metamorphosis in a natural English setting, Saki surreptitiously enlists his sympathetic readers' support for the self- or same-sexual, thereby transforming what Edwardians thought of as sexually "normal" or "natural," suggesting the flux of male sexualities and masculinities while avowing the vital naturalness of supposedly deviant or unorthodox desires and revealing the blandness and artificiality of heterosexual society. Saki does not allude to Greek or Roman myths in a Uranian way, referring to antiquity in order to frame homosexuality as a grand or higher form of love (as Wilde claimed in his trials); instead Saki uses Ovidian settings and metamorphosis to show male non-heterosexualities as primal desires which are even more fiercely natural and violently passionate than dull heterosexuality. Like Ovid in his *Metamorphoses*, Saki uses landscapes that "are impressionistic rather than realistic" (Charles Paul Segal 6), from the very Ovidian "secluded grove in a shady wood" in "Gabriel-Ernest" to the type of "sylvan landscapes" (Parry 275) that "form the essential backdrop for . . . the erotic connotations of the hunt" (269) in "The Music on the Hill." Yet Saki's natural world is not an artificial, pastoral setting but a realistic environment of danger and survival, of predators and prey.

In the Lycaon myth-inspired "Gabriel-Ernest," Munro recreates the typical Ovidian scene of the "quiet, unruffled pool, sheltered by encircling trees from the heat of the noonday sun" (Parry 276), except that Gabriel-Ernest is lying in the light, drying himself in the sun, which is "frequently suggestive of danger, a source of violence and destruction" in Ovid's work (277). The pool, and water in general, as in the *Metamorphoses*, is a "setting for violation" (279), where an uncanny male bond is made between the boy and the voyeuristic Van Cheele, while at the end of the story, the truth of the lad's sexual devouring of a child is white-washed by the suggestion that Gabriel-Ernest saved the child from drowning in a stream. Yet Saki accentuates the "persuasive sensuous atmosphere, [the] mood of luxurious lassitude" (Charles Paul Segal 8) of the pool not only in order to contrast such apparent serenity with the predatory violence of the boy, but to exaggerate the boy's indifferent, dandy-ish repose, the signature of the campy male who shows no concern for the niceties or proprieties of bourgeois (or, often in Saki's stories, upper-class) society. The indifference of Saki's campy protagonists in these Ovidian surroundings are complemented by the ruthless indifference of nature (which a camp writer such as Wilde disliked; see quotation at the beginning of this chapter). Saki's beastly humans flourish in, while Van Cheele and Mortimer are drawn to, and Sylvia is slain by, this "atmosphere given over to strange powers and pervaded by a sensuous lassitude where both physical and moral energies seem sapped and helpless" (82). The pool, the altar in the woods, and the land in "The Holy War" (see Footnote 67) are, as in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, "holy precincts [which] . . . become stages for the enactment of violence and death" (Parry 278). Indeed, Parry's assessment of Ovid's use of violence in a pastoral Greek landscape can almost as easily serve as an observation of Saki's use of homoerotic-tinged violence in a pastoral English landscape:

> In such landscapes violence and lust oscillate in a vicious cycle of venatic and sexual energy. In terrain which is itself paradoxically both virginal and dangerous, the roles of hunter and victim repeatedly are reversed; the virgin hunter is himself pursued and destroyed; the water of the pool both purifies and menaces; in the holy groves, acts of demonic brutality are perpetrated; in the shady woods, traditionally the haunt of lovers, fearsome violations take place in the name of love, as nature reveals at unexpected moments her claws and bloody fangs. (282)

The difference between Ovid's and Saki's natural settings is that the sexual energy in Saki's stories is a suppressed homosexuality, asexuality, or self-sexuality that lurks in the story's subtext, waiting to erupt, ready to strike when threatened by heterosexuality, usually represented by an aunt or wife who personifies matrimony and "settling down." The hunter who becomes victim in Saki's stories is not necessarily virginal but certainly heterosexual, while his or her pursuer must kill them in order to express his (or someone else's, as Pan serves as a proxy agent for Mortimer) threatened or suppressed desire. While those who are transformed in Ovid's work stand, in their new form, "for a passion by which, in the end, [they have] been fully absorbed" (Skulsky 35), the creatures in Saki's metamorphosis stories stand for a doubted or maligned non-heterosexual passion that is championed through the defeat of passionless, heterosexual skeptics. Van

Cheele's, Sylvia's, and Thirza's entrance into Saki's countryside, a "symbolic landscape" like that of Ovid's tales, "constitutes a separation from the familiar, from the sheltered world of civilization and society, and brings . . . an encounter with the violent instincts and passions laid bare and unchecked by the usual restraints" (Charles Paul Segal 18). Saki's aim is to expose the false restrictions of middle- and upper-class Edwardian society's "civilized" veneer of heterosexual and matrimonial restraints by having a beastly human (Gabriel-Ernest, Pan) express true, natural, violent passions, usually by killing a representative of conventional, heterosexual society (an aunt's charge, a domineering wife) and, in so doing, indirectly voicing and liberating a man's latent same- or self-sexual desire (Van Cheele, Mortimer). Saki's mixture of an Ovidian *genius loci* with a sinister campiness does not just use nature "red in tooth and claw" to savage heterosexual culture, but to claim the naturalness of men's (e.g., Van Cheele, Gabriel-Ernest, Mortimer) non-straight desires in the face of aunts or wives who are blind to and threaten their male sexualities. Whereas in Ovid's tale, Actaeon invades Diana's sacred grove, in Saki's story it is Sylvia who violates Pan's sanctum; Saki aligns nature not with women but with boy-men such as Gabriel-Ernest or a young Pan, pubescent, trickster, half-human, half-satyr figures who express "the elemental sexuality of nature" (17) through their queer lust.

Yet while Saki's camp makes non-heterosexualities natural and fierce, they are also, in Saki's stories, active, ever-roving and lurking, shifting from what may be narcissistic dandyism, to probable self-sexuality, to apparent same-sexuality, and the targets (children, wives) and defenders (Van Cheele, his aunt) change from story to story. Thus, though Saki's basic message — non-heterosexuality, springing from nature, slyly defeats the dominant culture of heterosexual matrimony — always lingers, the beastly messengers and agents are constantly de-camping and metamorphosing.

SHOCK WAVES

Years after the Reginald stories, then, "Gabriel-Ernest" and "The Music on the Hill," with their shifting, refracting metaphors and oblique hints, are not only the most (multi)vocal of Saki's queerer, campy works, but two of the earliest, and certainly most tightly written and carefully refined, stories that Saki wrote as a full-time writer in London after H. H. Munro ended his stint at the *Morning Post*. Reginald's successor, however, the young dandy prankster Clovis Sangrail, whose surname implies his unholiness, reveals the nature of his true desires in a homosocial oasis amid aridly heterosexual London in "Shock Tactics" (original publication date, if any, unknown; collected in the posthumous anthology *The Toys of Peace*). The story opens with nineteen-year-old Bertie Heasant talking to Ella in Kensington Gardens. Bertie has given her handkerchiefs but he is loathe to receive a thank-you note from Ella, as his mother intercepts all his correspondence. Bertie, a dandy in training, is concerned about "the set" of his "trousers" when he sits down on a chair next to Ella, for whom his feelings are not clearly amorous; he seems oddly removed from this girl who clearly likes him. Bertie is "fearful that perhaps he had chosen a size of handkerchief that was not within the correct feminine limit" (495) and tells Ella that if his mother "'found I'd been giving presents to *any one* there'd have been something to talk about for the next fortnight'" (496; my emphasis). Bertie goes on to "explain the situation" to his friend, who, we discover in a steamy setting, is Clovis:

> 'Is anything the matter?' asked Bertie's friend Clovis when they met that evening at the swimming-bath.
>
> 'Why do you ask?' said Bertie.
>
> 'When you wear a look of tragic gloom in a swimming-bath,' said Clovis, 'it's especially noticeable from the fact that you're wearing very little else. Didn't she like the handkerchiefs?' (496)

The Ovidian bathing-spots of woodland streams and pools, those hidden, reflecting bodies of water linked with secretive, remote, narcissistic nudity and sexuality in "Reginald's Choir Treat" and "Gabriel-Ernest," are reflected again here. Clovis wittily emphasizes Bertie's nudity in their homosocial surroundings, following his cheeky humour with a prosaic question concerning Bertie's relationship with Ella. The possible eroticism of the pair's relationship is literally displaced onto Clovis when his friend dives away from him, "inconsistently splashing Clovis from head to foot as he plunged into the water" (497).

In "The Recessional" (*WG*, July 8, 1911), we find Clovis in the Turkish baths[69] on Jermyn Street in London with a different Bertie — Bertie von Tahn, a character who appears in at least six stories, usually with Clovis. The story, similar to "Reginald's Rubaiyat," involves the aquatically reclined Clovis composing a ridiculous poem,[70] a scene to which the reader is introduced with a homoerotic, phallic image masked as mock-classical and literary: "Clovis sat in the hottest zone but two of a Turkish bath, alternately inert in statuesque contemplation and rapidly manœuvring a fountain-pen over the pages of a note-book" as Bertie, in a quintessential campy pose, "slung himself languidly into a neighbouring chair" (199). Then Bertie imagines Clovis as a nude image out of classical portraiture: "'If they couldn't get your likeness hung in the Academy as 'Clovis Sangrail, Esq., at work on his latest poem,' they could slip you in as a Study of the Nude or Orpheus descending into Jermyn Street'" (199-200). Later, after bantering with each other, Bertie "prepared to use his towel as a weapon of precision, but reflecting that he had a good deal of unprotected coast-line himself, and that Clovis was equipped with a pen as well as a towel, he relapsed pacifically into the depths of his chair" (200-01). After such coy exchanges and the imagined sight of nude men towel-snapping each other in a bathhouse, all loosely draped around a sketch centred on a nonsensical poem about fierce beasts, Saki may be winking at the publication of this cheeky story in *The Westminster Gazette* when he has Clovis say, "'' . . . the public wouldn't stand that sort of thing indefinitely'," and Bertie reply, "'The public will stand a good deal'" (202).

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[69] Turkish baths are also mentioned in a risqué way in the playlet "The Baker's Dozen" (*Journal of the Leinster Regiment*, October 1909):

> Mrs. Paly-Paget: "It was like a Turkish bath. And, of course, one couldn't see anything."
> Major Dumbarton: "Then it was not like a Turkish bath." (93)

In "A Holiday Task," Kenelm Jerton, at the story's end, flees "down to the Turkish bath, and stayed there for hours" (344), while Henry Malson, because of a servants' strike, is stuck in a "'new-fangled Turkish bath that he insists on taking with him everywhere'" (317) in "The Byzantine Omelette."

[70] The title of the story recalls "Recessional," Kipling's 1897 poem, an urgent exhortation to military, imperial Englishmen that they never forget they are serving God, which stands in sharp, comical contrast to Clovis's languid, savage nature-celebrating nonsense poem.

In both "The Recessional" and "Shock Tactics," Saki could be masking Munro's own experiences. Langguth suggests that, given the detailed description of them in "The Recessional," Munro was familiar with the Jermyn Street baths, which would have been an apt place for gay men in London to cruise one another (187). Perhaps in order to forestall such an insinuation, Ethel Munro writes in her account of her brother that "wherever water was, he was not happy unless he was in it" (672) and that in "London, swimming-baths helped to keep him fit" (694). In close friend W. R. Spikesman's account of his days with her brother that Ethel included in her biography, the future comrade-in-arms notes that, on the day war was declared, "We had spent the afternoon swimming at baths; tea, a walk in the Green Park; these places were often visited by him" (708).

In "Shock Tactics," the fictional pair's conversation in the bath-house launches Clovis on his course of interference. He sends increasingly fantastic, conspiratorial notes, marked "private" from a "Clotilde," to Bertie that his mother opens and reads to her shock. Her badgering of Bertie as to the identity of this "'adventuress'" (497) and the meaning of her allusions to jewels brings no answer from her unaware son. When Bertie's mother finally reads a letter signed by Clovis that explains all, she realizes that her spying has been publicized and mocked and she is sufficiently abashed to cease her surveillance, going so far as to pay Bertie "hush-money" so he won't circulate the story of her embarrassment (499).

In addition to its homoerotic water scene, then, "Shock Tactics" also offers the common Saki-esque trope of metamorphosis. Clovis turns himself into "Clotilde," feminizing himself as Bertie's "exotic" love interest (497).[71] His "private," heterosexual love letters seem to hide a deeper, homosexual truth and, while Clovis' hoax leads to Bertie's correspondence being safe from his mother's prying eyes, Ella is never again mentioned. Bertie's love interest has, it seems, literally been replaced by his bath-house friend, for the dandy's conquest of Bertie's mother through his unusual shock tactics means that, as Saki suggestively ends the story, "Clovis has no more devoted slave than Bertie Heasant" (499). Saki seems to be reversing the male-male to male-female love arc of Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* by showing the triumph of homosociality or homosexuality over a flat heterosexual romance and the defeat of a nosy matriarch, an obvious representative of heterosexual reproduction who is forced to pay hush-money here, itself a deft reversal of the threat of blackmail that many homosexuals faced (see also Footnote 62), which would have meant the "possibility of exposure and prison" at the time (Langguth 174). In the autumn of 1912, however, the publication of Saki's first novel, *The Unbearable Bassington*, marked not only the zenith and sunset of the author's dandy fiction, but brought Reginald and Clovis' final successor, a youth who would risk a far worse fate than blackmail to stay true to his dandy-ness.

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[71] As Stern points out, historically, "Clovis, a Merovingian king who reigned from 481 to 511, was married to Clothilde" (Notes, 296); note the similarity of the names, both beginning with "Clo." Clovis' narcissistic adoption of an opposite-sex pseudonym for himself, a basically self-sexual act to gain Bertie's same-sexual love, echoes Munro's adoption of an exotic youth-inspired pseudonym that voices self- and same-sex desire in his fiction.

The insufferable boy of the title is Comus Bassington, an eroticized ephebe who "unconcernedly . . . might purchase a carnation for his buttonhole" (588) and seems plucked from a myth-inspired painting:

> In appearance he exactly fitted his fanciful Pagan name. His large green-grey eyes seemed for ever asparkle with goblin mischief and the joy of revelry, and the curved lips might have been those of some wickedly laughing faun; one almost expected to see embryo horns fretting the smoothness of his sleek dark hair. The chin was firm, but one looked in vain for a redeeming touch of ill-temper in the handsome, half-mocking, half-petulant face. (577-78)

The tame-ability of this amalgam of the Pan-like boy from "The Music in the Hill" and Reginald and Clovis is debated by two of his teachers. Comus disciplines other boys by caning, a homoerotic punishment he seems to relish, as he flips a coin with a fellow student for the privilege (578). Drawing a line across a boy's backside with chalk, he commands him to "'Bend a little more forward. . . . and much tighter'" (580). Soon "Lancelot was made vividly aware of what a good cane can be made to do in really efficient hands" (580) and, after he jumps from his submissive position in pain, he is "re-arranged to the taste of his executioner" (581). In a letter to his sister, the caned boy writes of the horrible authority that some of the boys yield as school prefects, acting like

"'. . . Beasts. Bassington . . . is the limit as Beasts go'" (581). Once again, homoeroticism is masked as "beastly," that is, fiercely natural, and then, yet again, Saki describes a titillating bath scene. In the next chapter, Comus' mother reproaches him outside the bathroom, and her son announces in a racist parody of an Indian's English, ". . .'me washee from the neck all the way down to the merrythought, and now washee down from the merrythought to—'" (587) His mother cuts him off, and then she flees when she hears "sounds as of a sprawling dripping body clambering hastily out of the bath. . . . One cannot effectively scold a moist nineteen-year-old boy clad only in a bath-towel and a cloud of steam" (587).

John Carey feels that these two scenes show a sort of prurient, gay "self-indulgence" on Saki's part:

> the giggling excitement with which we are almost allowed a peek at Comus in the bath-tub . . . leaves an uncomfortable impression, and the caning scene . . . is pornography of a peculiarly blatant kind. If a young woman were substituted for the boy victim in this scene it would immediately become apparent that its level was that of the spanking mag. Such a substitution would, presumably, have spoiled the satisfactions afforded its creator—satisfactions which, it seems, include the circumstance that it is to preserve himself from marriage to a young woman, the victim's sister, that Comus pays such vigorous attention to the male bottom. It is impossible to imagine Clovis being a party to anything so self-revealing (xii).

In fact, Clovis is nearly as revealing in his artful "shock tactics," but Carey's point, that the homoeroticism of Saki's novel is atypically blatant, rings true. In all his queerer fiction, the author-narrator buries the subtexts of campiness and same- or self-sexuality under a plot about a bachelor or disinterested man trapped in a hollow heterosexual relationship or surrounded by marriage-pushing women. In *The Unbearable Bassington*, however, Saki strips away the narrative detachment and his protagonist so that little is left to the imagination and cheeky dissidence borders on expressed, even flaunted, desire.

The homoeroticism of the caning scene is less surprising, though, given the tradition of implied male-male desire in English public school fiction.[72] Victorian-era public schools, training grounds for men who would travel the empire, were concerned with their graduates' future "contact . . . with peoples who seemed to be 'semi-barbarous'," leading them to train "the civilized imperial mind . . . to be dissociated from the potential savagery and worrying sexuality of the human body" (Bristow 64). Saki, as we have seen, certainly had no desire to "prove the boy was not a beast [by] desexualizing him" (65) and homosexuality can even be seen in the first public-school story of "Christian manliness," Thomas Hughes' *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1857), as well as, for instance, hero-worship of a classmate that borders on homosexuality in *The Boy's Own Volume of Fact, Fiction, History and Adventure* (1865), Horace Annesley Vachell's *The Hill: A Romance of Friendship* (1905), and the works of Uranian writers such as William Johnson Cory (81, 86, 83).[73]

While the novel's school and bath scenes offer Saki's most explicit sexualization of the dandy in his fiction, with the eventual failure and death of Comus, however, *The Unbearable Bassington* is also an elegy for Saki's dandy figure, as the narrator-author seems to come to a realization that there should no longer be a place for an effete idler in his work or, indeed, English society. From the moment Comus is introduced, we are told that this boy from a single-parent, cash-strapped family is "in all respects . . . certainly damned" (578) and his mother tells him that, with his failure to marry the wealthy Elaine de Frey, his idleness and mischief have proven utterly unproductive: "'behind it all there is the fatal damning gift of utter hopelessness'" (651). Nature, which has given rise to, sheltered, and voiced the Saki-esque dandy's sexual difference, now reveals Comus to be the ignored flower in a world of ruthless fauna: "Gaiety and good looks had carried Comus successfully and, on the whole, pleasantly, through schooldays and a recurring succession of holidays . . . . [But in] an animal world, and a fiercely competitive animal world at that, something more was needed than the decorative *abandon* of the field lily" (588). Comus is banished to West Africa by his own mother, where he dies in the wild, and the world of the dandy fades, soon erased utterly by Saki's second novel, *When William Came*, and its martial vision of a German-occupied England whose patriotism and independence have been surrendered, in part, by effeminate, wimpy, indolent boy-men like Comus and his predecessors, Reginald and Clovis.[74]

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[72] Langguth suggests that Munro, who attended Bedford Grammar School when 14 and 15, may have been caned himself, but as to that and whether or not Munro's experiences at Bedford were good, bad, sexual, or otherwise eye-opening, Langguth supposes that "whatever letters Hector wrote to Ethel during that period she destroyed, first to stop the family from prying and later to thwart posterity from doing the same" (25).

[73] Note, too, Comus' ardent embrace of sports in school: "At football . . . he tackled as if that act of bringing his man headlong to the ground was in itself a sensuous pleasure" (577).

MUNRO-SAKI'S REPUDIATION OF SAKI'S CAMP

There is an instant, late in *When William Came*, when the author-narrator writes of

> a lurking, moving life of which one knew nothing beyond the sense that it was there. There, and very near. If there had been wood-gods and wicked-eyed fauns in the sunlit groves and hillsides of old Hellas, surely there were watchful, living things of kindred mould in this dusk-hidden wilderness of field and hedge and coppice. (800)

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[74] *When William Came* was one of the last in a string of English novels concerned with German invasion, as Donald Read notes in his "Introduction: Crisis Age or Golden Age?" in his edited collection, *Edwardian England*:

> A steady number of books, pamphlets, articles and plays had appeared during the Edwardian years about German spies or about German invasion plans. Some of these were widely noticed – *The Riddle of the Sands* (1903) by Erskine Childers, *The Invasion of 1910* by William Le Quex (1906), and Guy du Maurier's drama, *An Englishman's Home* (1909). *Punch* of 16 June 1909 carried a full-page cartoon captioned 'The Great War of 19–': '*Major*. "It's pretty certain we shall have to fight 'em in the course of the next four years." *Subaltern*. "Well, let's hope it'll come between the polo and the huntin'".' (29-30)

Then this faint glimmer of the old Saki is gone. Savage, dissident nature is no longer associated with the dandy or the non-heterosexual male in Munro-Saki's *When William Came*; the English countryside is the final retreat for military manliness and staunch patriotism, with the enemy figures of the dandy, Jew, or German all excluded. In the novel, the patriotic Murrey Yeovil returns to a beaten England and bemoans, rages at, and seethes under the Teutonic victors' rule. Even though Yeovil is coming back to his stale marriage from adventures in Russia, he is so drained by the effects of marsh-fever contracted abroad that, confined in this tamed and beaten England, he seems to be an idler not far removed from a Comus; in Victoria Station, he "stood waiting, in an attitude something between listlessness and impatience . . . . Yeovil was a grey-faced young man, with . . . a rather wistful mouth, and an air of lassitude that was evidently only a temporary characteristic" (699). Yet he never acts on his impatience and rebels, instead preferring impotent, bristling scorn and to mock Jews, the idle rich, and the ignorant lower classes, and waiting, at the end of the novel, for the younger generation to revolt against their new masters, while feeling "the choking, searing shame of self-reproach . . . *He* had laid down his arms . . . He had given up the fight and joined the ranks of the hopelessly subservient" (813). Throughout the novel, however, Yeovil redirects his self-loathing — "'I don't want to *degenerate* into a slacker,' he tells his wife Cicely upon arriving home (701; my emphasis) — by targeting, in part, the very dandies and wits that Saki champions with Reginald and Clovis. In a foretaste of "An Old Love," Munro-Saki describes a group of lads who cannot fight, this time because passive, pathetic Englishmen have allowed the Germans to conquer the nation:

> A group of lads from the tea-shop clustered on the pavement and watched the troops go by, staring at a phase of life in which they had no share. The martial

> trappings, the swaggering joy of life, the comradeship of camp and barracks, the hard discipline of drill yard and fatigue duty, the long sentry watches, the trench digging, forced marches, wounds, cold, hunger, makeshift hospitals, and the blood-wet laurels—these were not for them. (762)

This passage seems to further stray from Saki's usual narrative tone, thanks to Munro's thinly disguised yearning to serve his country. If these are "things [the onlooking boys] might only guess at" (763), the lengthy fetishizing of army hardships and supposed glories alike in Munro-Saki's list suggests that Munro does not just guess at, but strongly hopes for entry into, such a world.

Then the author-narrator offers up an easy butt for his and Yeovil's contempt in the figure of Percival Plarsey,

> a man of perhaps forty-one years of age, who looked slightly older from his palpable attempts to look very much younger. . . . a plump, pale-faced, short-legged individual, with puffy cheeks, over-prominent nose, and thin colourless hair. His mother, with nothing more than maternal prejudice to excuse her, had discovered some twenty odd years ago that he was a well-favoured young man, and had easily imbued her son with the same opinion. The slipping away of years and the natural transition of the unathletic boy into the podgy unhealthy-looking man did little to weaken the tradition; Parsley had never been able to relinquish the idea that a youthful charm and comeliness still centred in his person, and laboured daily at his toilet with a devotion that a hopelessly lost cause is so often able to inspire. He babbled incessantly about himself and the accessory futilities of his life in short, neat, complacent sentences, and in a voice that Ronald Storre said reminded one of a fat bishop blessing a butter-making competition. While he babbled he kept his eyes fastened on his listeners to observe the impression which his important little announcements and pronouncements were making. On the present occasion he was pattering forth a detailed description of the upholstery and fittings of his new music-room. (763)

This over-indulged, fat and fatuous being, Saki warns, is what a useless, aged, desperately attention-seeking, self-absorbed dandy Reginald or Comus could become. The matriarch, so often disparaged by Saki, has coddled this sickly wimp and made him feel self-important as he blithely prattles on about décor and art. His supposed aphorisms are nothing but "short, neat, complacent sentences." Yeovil, with whom the author-narrator consistently sides, is only allowed by pathetic "civilization" to shoot down this pompous, self-serious windbag of a dandy with a snide comment about how commonplace Percival's favourite Mozart statue has become, but he would "gladly have contented himself with the weapons with which nature had endowed him, if he might have kicked and pommelled the abhorrent specimen of male humanity whom he saw before him" (764). Saki reduces Percival to a type, an abomination, a blight on patriotic British manhood, while it is Yeovil who belongs to the "race" and who is endowed by "nature," a treacherous reversal of the fiercely natural same-sexuality seen in Gabriel-Ernest or the boyish Pan who acts for Mortimer. Plarsey reappears, in dialogue only, amidst the empty banter after a play, a scene which an earlier Saki would have infused with the witticisms and one-liners of a sparkling conversation between Reginald and the Duchess (see, for instance, "Reginald at the Theatre").

While *When William Came* is clearly an exhortation to the English to defend their country vigilantly and fervently in the event of a military conflict, it is also a co-opted Saki's lengthy encouragement of Munro — whose sole military-imperial adventure was cut short by illness in Burma twenty years earlier — to enlist if war erupts. While Tom Keriway in *The Unbearable Bassington* may represent the manly adventurer that Munro wished to be, the 41-year-old Percival seems to be Saki's warning to the 43-year-old Munro to avoid the ignominy of middle-aged, effete pacifism. Langguth argues that *The Unbearable Bassington* may touch on a gay Munro's mid-life crisis, when the homosexual man's "youthful appeal drains away" (192). Here in *When William Came*, Saki seems to be saying, is Munro's anti-role model; Munro, hailing "from a proud tradition of military imperialism" (193), had criticized England's Boer War involvement (in *The Westminster Alice*) and not yet had an opportunity, since returning from an illness-ridden stint as a military policeman in Burma decades before, to continue in his family's tradition. But as a European war approached, he seems to have metamorphosed his anxious sexuality into a hypermasculine patriotism. With this transference and displacement, the lines between Munro and Saki are blurred, not just in writing style (*When William Came* is an unironic screed almost devoid of wit), but in terms of dependent dissidence. The Edwardian England on which Saki depends for his dissident, heterosexuality-undermining satire becomes the country for which patriotic, manly Munro is willing to lose his life while a merging Munro-Saki exhorts Britons to enlist and derides sissy pacifists and unmanly idlers for not fighting. Is Percival Plarsey a changing Saki's reminder to Munro of what he must not become, or is *When William Came*, particularly in such scenes, being written by a zealously patriotic, macho Munro who is simply adopting and co-opting Saki's name and reputation? Saki's camp is never about sexuality (homo-, a-, or otherwise) so much as masculinity and, amid fears of male degeneration in England since the Boer War, Munro's eagerness to fight (see his letter to the *Morning Post* in Appendix Four, written the day that England officially entered the war; Munro enlisted in August 25, 1914 at the age of 43 and refused a commission) led, in his fiction, to an overlap of authorial voices and personas until, in *When William Came* and writings for the *Fortnightly Gazette*, the consistent, separated personas of Munro and Saki are an awkward amalgamation of conflicted, confused personalities and impersonations.

In the novel, the young Cornelian Valpy serves as Munro-Saki's mockery of Saki's previous dandies, from Reginald to Comus. Chapter XVII, "The Event of the

Season," begins in a familiar place, now turned into a setting of partitions and barriers that is strangely stripped of its usual homoeroticism and described in a detached tone:

> In the first swelter room of the new Osmanli Baths in Cork Street four or five recumbent individuals, in a state of moist nudity and self-respecting inertia, were smoking cigarettes or making occasional pretence of reading damp newspapers. A glass wall with a glass door shut them off from the yet more torrid regions of the further swelter chambers; another glass partition disclosed the dimly-lit vault where other patrons of the establishment had arrived at the stage of being pounded and kneaded and sluiced by Oriental-looking attendants. The splashing and trickling of taps, the flip-flap of wet slippers on a wet floor, and the low murmur of conversation, filtered through glass doors, made an appropriately drowsy accompaniment to the scene.
>
> A new-comer fluttered into the room, beamed at one of the occupants, and settled himself with an air of elaborate languor in a long canvas chair. Cornelian Valpy was a fair young man, with perpetual surprise impinged on his countenance, and a chin that seemed to have retired from competition with the rest of his features. The beam of recognition that he had given to his friend or acquaintance subsided into a subdued but lingering simper. (795)

In this more discreet, sealed-off, "self-respecting" world of "filtered" and bounded "new Osmanli"ness, Valpy, with that archetypal pose of languid recumbence on a chair, is clearly a dandy, but Munro-Saki's changed attitude to this figure is revealed in the derogatory "simper" he gives him. The anti-bourgeois nonchalance, idleness, and pranks of his campy wits are now vices in an occupied society, an England that demands fervent patriotic action from people who will openly defend the nation, not be slyly passionate about mundane, private sexualities. Further emphasizing the difference between Saki's pro-dandy stories and this scene, Cornelian's neighbour echoes Clovis' line in "The Recessional," replacing the mock-serious "'look of tragic gloom'" (496) with a harsh, unironic observation: "'When you wear a look of idiotic complacency in a Turkish bath,' said the other, 'it is the more noticeable from the fact that you are wearing nothing else'" (796). Cornelian tells his friend about the "'last event of the season,'" a party at which people dressed up as historical figures, accompanied by someone dressed as that figure's main characteristic (796-98). The chapter is essentially a way to, from an outside point of view, summarize events involving Yeovil and his wife, but it also reveals the dandy's fear and timidity in the face of political repression. Cornelian, like so many others whom Yeovil meets and derides, is afraid to even speak out against the German occupiers, warning his friend, "'Hush!' . . . 'You don't know who may overhear you in a place like this. You'll get yourself into trouble.'" Cornelian is interested in how his costume was mentioned in the newspaper and, notably, he dressed as Nero, with "'""Insensate Vanity""'" accompanying him (799). The chapter ends with Cornelian droning on about the costume he wore for so long that "his companion rose softly, flung his cigarette end into the little water-bowl, and passed into the farther swelter room. Cornelian Valpy was left, still clothed in a look of ineffable complacency, still engaged, in all probability, in reclothing himself in the finery of the previous evening" (799). Valpy is wittier but otherwise no better than Plarsey as he escapes into a delusional, narcissistic celebration of his fancy dress. Munro-Saki casts him, and the Saki-esque dandy type, aside, leaving him to his useless self and self-love, and letting him drown in the author-narrator's scalding criticism that such Cornelians are not only unfit for and uninterested in war, but are now the same complacent, predictable creatures that Reginald and Clovis used to fool and deride.

A character who stands in for Munro-Saki the author-narrator, further emphasizing the novel's bitter point, appears in the guise of Herr von Kwarl, a "bachelor of the type that is called confirmed . . . Children and animals he adored, women and plants he accounted somewhat of a nuisance" (724). He expresses Munro-Saki's hope for a stronger future England when he warns that the youth of the country can still prove to be the saving generation (729); he notes the pathetic, weakened present state of the country when he agrees with a banker (always a figure of dislike in Saki's fiction) that, ironically, the English

> ". . . have made great sacrifices to avoid the burden of military service."
> "Dear God," exclaimed Herr von Kwarl, "as you say, they have made sacrifices on that altar!" (730)

At a time when England and Germany were already suspicious imperial foes, Munro-Saki expresses the pathetic emasculation of British military manhood through a sarcastic, mocking German conqueror; Englishmen once made mortal sacrifices for King and country, but now are so weak-kneed that they would gladly give up for their patriotism and imperial loyalty in order to half-live as slaves to another empire.

When William Came ends with a group of young boys who no longer represent, by proxy, the dandy's subversion of adult, heterosexual society, as in "Gabriel-Ernest" or "Reginald's Choir Treat," but the last serious hope for an infantilized, degenerate, colonized England to find its manly patriotism and rise up against Teutonic tyranny. These rebels, the Boy Scouts, were formed by veteran Robert Baden-Powell in 1908 at least in part to combat the decline of British civilization and, specifically, English masculinity (see Hynes 26-28). The movement attracted 100,000 within two years of its founding, and "Scouts were to be trained in 'energetic patriotism' by mainly outdoor activities. The organization was avowedly non-political, but Conservative bias could not be concealed in the *Scouting for Boys* section on 'Government'" (Read, *Edwardian England* 245) and, along with its concern for the empire and sexual purity, the Boy Scouts were meant to provide "a militaristic insurance against a recurrence of the political and military incompetence of the Boer War" (Hyam 73). Munro-Saki's notion of the countryside in his war novel fits with Baden-Powell's "vision of the outdoor life," which was

> resolutely anti-urban, masculine, anti-sensual and censorious of all expressions of sexuality . . . [it] drew upon the myth of the regenerative powers of rural England – a countryside inhabited by the squire and his *Country Life* country house, the bulwark against emasculating decadence and the degenerative influences of civilisation. Old England was the repository of the nation's moral character.
> . . . Both imperialist and New Life versions of pastoralism were sustained by their belief in the corrupting influence of metropolitan life and the regenerative impulse of nature. The hegemonic concern was the revival of English ethnicity and its racial stock. Whether paganistic or conservative, the evocation of mother nature carried with it a strong hint of eugenics and an anti-cosmopolitan brand of nationalism. (Rutherford 56)

With *When William Came*, Munro-Saki's expression of natural, fiercely unorthodox sexuality lurking in a far-from-idyllic English countryside is gone, replaced by an idealized, rural heart of white, imperial England. The frolicking, wild youths of Saki's earlier fiction are replaced by Baden-Powell's stoutly marching, empire-defending young men.[75]

MUNRO'S NEW LOVE

After August 1914, when England entered World War I officially on the 4th and Munro was accepted into the military three weeks later (Langguth 251), there is no clear evidence that Saki wrote any more, apart from the war sketches "The Square Egg" and

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[75] Saki's "Potted Parliament" columns, as a political commentator for *The Outlook*, are, with their mixture of reportage and mockery, an awkward merger of H. H. Munro the *MP* correspondent and Saki the satirist, and the confusion of Munro-Saki in these columns is perhaps most evident in the final column, published August 8 but recording Sir Edward Grey's announced intention to go to war on August 3. Munro-Saki takes the political proceedings quite seriously, as they turn out to be pro-war — "Grey's speech, when one looked back at it, was a statesmanlike utterance, delivered in excellent manner, dignified and convincing" — and concludes with a parting shot (presaging "An Old Love") at the hypocrisy of anti-war agitators who preach class warfare and the perfidy of those who think peace most economically beneficial:

> There seems to be some confusion of mind in these circles of political thought between a nation of shopkeepers and a nation of shoplifters.
>
> If these men are on the side of the angels, may I always have a smell of brimstone about me.

"Birds on the Western Front," which appeared in the posthumous 1924 collection *The Square Egg and Other Sketches*, and four pieces about army life and the war which appeared from April to June in the *22nd Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers' Fortnightly Gazette*. It is impossible to know whether or not the two *Square Egg* contributions (first-person accounts of the trenches and a French farmer's story, and of continuing bird life as observed from the front lines) were signed, authored, or meant to be published as being by Saki, but the *Fortnightly Gazette* sketches are, at least, published as being written "By 'Saki,' 'A' Company," not by Munro, revealing the awkward joining of Munro and Saki into a vehemently patriotic, 'manly' voice and persona, at the same time that Munro's rant, "An Old Love," appeared in the *Morning Post* (Apr. 23, 1915).[76] Perhaps the piece was published under Munro's name because the author thought his non-fictional screed would better rest on his reputation as the newspaper's former correspondent.

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[76] Lane notes that the single quotations around 'Saki' in the *Fortnightly Gazette* pieces "designate it as 'something . . . decorative' and visibly 'apart' (i.e., *as* a part)" (219), the same qualities of actors-turned-soldiers whom Munro-Saki criticizes in "Pau-Puk-Keewis." Yet the single quotations around 'Saki' also appear around the 'A' in "'A' Company," suggesting that both instances of punctuation are simply the editor's additions, with the first likely meant to emphasize that Saki is a pseudonym (as in the single quotation marks around the name in various editions of Saki volumes or the 1935 English anthology in which "The Miracle-Merchant" appears, or the double quotation marks around the name below the title of the same play in a 1934 American anthology; the *nom de plume* often appears with quotation marks around it in reference entries or other collected editions). Lane and Langguth also make much of Munro's spelling mistake, "Enroled," in a telegraph to his sister about his conscription, which Langguth and Lane see as unconscious evidence of Munro "entering upon the last impersonation of his life" (Langguth 251; cf. Lane 219, Notes, 284); as I explain in the Introduction and point out elsewhere, Munro, too, may have often been an impersonation, particularly if he masked a non-heterosexual masculinity. While I agree that Munro and Saki puddled into a new persona with the war, of course the word may have simply been misspelled by the telegraph office or Munro himself (he misspells "fidgety," for instance, in Letter #30 of his business correspondence with John Lane — see Appendix Three). Finally, Lane states that the attachment of "Munro" to "An Old Love" is important "because it completes the shift from Saki to 'Saki' to Munro" (Notes, 284), neglecting the fact that "An Old Love" was published (and thus likely written) before the first in the series of *Fortnightly Gazette* pieces appeared.

From a literary point of view, it is hard to see the reason for the *Fortnightly Gazette* pieces being published under the name "Saki." As the author was writing in a military periodical, it would make more sense to sign writings intended for a reading public of soldiers with his officially enrolled name ("H. H. Munro" or the like). The identification of the pieces with "Saki" suggests that Munro-Saki wished to present his army writings under the auspices of the more widely recognizable, commercial *nom de plume*, which would lend greater authority and publicity to his views; it is unknown if members of Munro's company and other soldiers were aware that H. H. Munro was also Saki, though Langguth claims, likely on the basis of a telephone interview with a veteran (see Notes, 353), that "the soldiers in the other companies did not always know that they were reading the work of a noted London writer" (260).

"An Old Love" is a seething fulmination that begins as a self-conscious martial romance. Munro-Saki maintains that most boys' first and oldest love is for war. Any self-respecting man who still has something of the boy in him, he writes, feels the "thrill that those far-off [conflicts] call forth in us," a feeling which may be "ethically indefensible, but it comes in the first place from something too deep to be driven out" and now, he exalts, "the magic region of the Low Countries is beckoning to us again, as it beckoned to our forefathers, who went campaigning there almost from force of habit" (*Short Stories 2* 206). Then Munro-Saki, having spoken to willing, boy-men patriots, upholding militancy as both a tradition and a passion, shoots down his main target of scorn before criticizing those in commerce who shrewdly urge neutrality:

> One must admit that we have in these Islands a variant from the red-blooded type. One or two young men have assured me that they are not in the least interested in the war – "I'm not at all patriotic, you know," they announce, as one might announce that one was not a vegetable or did not use a safety-razor. There are others whom I have met within the recent harrowing days who had no place for the war crisis in their thoughts and conversations; they would talk by the hour about chamber-music, Greek folk-dances, Florentine art, and the difficulty of getting genuine old oak furniture, but the national honour and the national danger were topics that bored them. One felt that the war would affect them chiefly as involving a possible shortage in the supply of eau-de-Cologne or by debarring them from visiting some favourite art treasure at a Munich gallery. It is inconceivable that these men were ever boys, they have certainly not grown up into men; one cannot call them womanish – the women of our race are made of different stuff. They belong to no sex and it seems a pity that they should belong to any nation; other nations probably have similar encumbrances, but we seem to have more of them than we either desire or deserve. (206-07)

In its clinical, excluding tone ("our race," "we"), cultural dismissiveness, near-eugenic stance ("we seem to have more of them than we either desire or deserve"), and viciously bigoted attack, all in the name of an obsession with the vicious triangle of masculinity, nationalism, and militancy, "An Old Love" is, read alone, a disturbing excoriation. But read alongside *When William Came*, "An Old Love" marks the emergence of an anxiously hyper-masculine, ultra-conventional Munro-Saki who turns on the very dandy figures he had so often celebrated as rebels against the Edwardian establishment.[77] These pro-war writings show us just how clearly, as his friend Rothay Reynolds noted, in preparing for war with the army, Munro-Saki "did his utmost to conform himself to it and to force others to do the same" (xxv).

"Pau-Puk-Keewis" (*22nd Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers' Fortnightly Gazette*, May 10, 1915) takes its title from a cowardly brave in Longfellow's "Hiawatha" who doesn't want to fight. In the piece, the "'Saki'" of "'A' Company" savages those "'Boys of the Lapdog breed'," the "healthy, able-bodied, self-satisfied young men [who are] serenely contented to be strutting and posturing and dancing [on stage] before applauding audiences" (*The Best of Saki* 247). Saki looks critically at actors through Yeovil's eyes in *When William Came*, too, but here he viciously dehumanizes them:

> They have set themselves as something apart, and after the War let them be treated as something apart; something human and decorative and amusing; but something not altogether British, not exactly masculine, something that one does not treat as an equal. (247-48)

It is nearly impossible, after reading Saki stories about similarly "self-satisfied" young dandies at the theatre ("Reginald at the Theatre"), playing charades (e.g., "A Touch of Realism"), or devising a music-hall show ("Cousin Teresa"), not to see Munro-Saki's

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[77] Interestingly, "An Old Love" also relates to the use of the Boy Scouts in *When William Came*, for Munro's criticism of men's lack of chauvinism corresponds to boys' "Want of Patriotism," noted as a "National Inefficiency" in "Baden-Powell's table of National inefficiencies," a condition caused by "Indifference to Higher Conscience" and a "Want of Self-discipline" that can be remedied by Boy Scout training (Bristow 194).

"Pau-Puk-Keewis" as a sharp backlash against such characters and conceits.[78] In an undated interview with the *Bodleian*, "John Lane's publicity magazine," Munro/Saki tells the unnamed interviewer in a flip, dandy-ish way that "'I like oysters, asparagus and politics. Also the theatre'" (Langguth 189). If Saki saw himself, through his five dramas,[79] as one of those "comrades of the stage [who] have gone to the war or to train for the war" (247), then by turning on those he had left behind, as well as on his own creations, a (con)fused Munro-Saki was, perhaps, evidence of a "contempt for [anti-homosexual] society . . . that . . . had turned inward" (Langguth 261). While Saki had distanced himself from heterosexual English society in some of his stories, with the start of World War I Munro and Saki joined forces to show that they were not apart from, but a part of patriotic, fighting, manly English society. With *When William Came*, Munro seems to employ his literary persona to both reflect the patriotic fighter he wishes to be in the call-to-arms message of the novel and warn his worldly self against becoming an impotent male or faint-hearted, effete non-man like Yeovil or, even worse, the various dandy figures in the novel; Munro's self-convincing through Saki's fiction is further suggested by a letter from Munro to Lane notifying the publisher of his enlistment: "It is only fitting that the author of 'When William Came' should go to meet William half way" (Langguth 253). Munro/Saki, who changes plots, agents, and targets within a unique camp world that mocks Munro's Edwardian society, begins to turn on his selves in 1913 as Munro-Saki targets, confuses and muddles his personas in a narrative and ideological shift that perhaps even successfully convinces his selves, with "An Old Love," and "Pau-Puk-Keewis," that Munro-Saki is a masculine equal and a proud fighter for King and country. The written evidence of this reinvention, however, with its jarring shifts in tone, humourlessness, and strident language, should fail to convince any attentive reader, critic, or biographer of Munro and Saki that any smooth, heartfelt reconciliation of the two took place.[80]

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[78] In fact, a scene in "Reginald at the Theatre" exemplifies the very dandy-ish indifference to patriotism and imperialism that Munro-Saki condemns in "Pau-Puk-Keewis," when the Duchess questions narcissistic Reginald's unconventionality:

> "But there are other things," she continued, "which I suppose are to a certain extent sacred even to you. Patriotism, for instance, and Empire, and Imperial responsibility, and blood-is-thicker-than-water, and all that sort of thing."
>
> Reginald waited for a couple of minutes before replying, while the Lord of Rimini temporarily monopolized the acoustic possibilities of the theatre.
>
> "That is the worst of a tragedy," he observed, "one can't always hear oneself talk. Of course I accept the Imperial idea and the responsibility. After all, I would just as soon think in Continents as anywhere else. And some day, when the season is over and we have the time, you shall explain to me the exact blood-brotherhood and all that sort of thing that exists between a French Canadian and a mild Hindoo and a Yorkshireman, for instance." (13)

[79] "The Death-Trap," "Karl-Ludwig's Window" (a "one-act drama"), the play "The Watched Pot" (1914; written with Charles Maude), and the short play "The Miracle-Merchant" (a dramatization of "The Hen," a story that appeared in the 1914 collection *Beasts and Super-Beasts*), plus the 1909 playlet "The Baker's Dozen" (collected in *Reginald in Russia*). Dates for most of Saki's plays are unknown as none was apparently ever published or staged in Munro's lifetime; the first three plays first appeared in the posthumous collection *The Square Egg, and Other Sketches, with Three Plays and Illustrations* (London: John Lane The Bodley Head, 1924), while "The Miracle-Merchant" first appeared in a 1934 drama anthology. In his interview for the *Bodleian* (which Langguth dates as 1911 or 1912) Munro/Saki tells the interviewer that he has written for the theatre, but had nothing produced yet (Langguth 238).

Munro's sublimation of his non-heterosexuality in a fervent, macho patriotism reveals the interconnected tripwires of nationalism, masculinity, and militarism. As Lane notes, Munro associates the threat of colonization in the wake of post-war defeat "with emasculation, insisting that Britain overthrow its enemy to regain masculine authority" (220). Saki's dependent dissidence is ultimately shattered because Munro chooses to side with the culture of masculine imperialism in which he had been raised, enlisting the sexually subversive Saki to his cause; thus Munro's anxiety to conform to masculine nationalism defeats Saki's sexual rebelliousness. It is as if Munro, who attended Pencarwick School in Exmouth for a time and went to Bedford Grammar School for four terms, from September 1885 until December 1886 (see also Footnotes 52 and 72), turned his back on a valourization of the homoerotic elements of male-male bonding — as suggested in Saki's *The Unbearable Bassington* and which was a potential threat to the respect for the heterosocial, bourgeois and upper-class adult order being inculcated in the public schools of Munro's youth — and chooses to show boys and men (as in *When William Came* and "An Old Love") "'pulling together'" in an echo of "the almost religious espousal of loyalty to house and school [that] formed the micro-language of loyalty to race and nation" (Rutherford 16). Bedford was a school, after all, "that had [so] long recruited among young men who intended to follow their fathers into the military [as did Munro when his father Charles, an Inspector-General of Police in Burma, procured him a position there in the Military Police in 1893], it was called a nursery of the Empire" (Langguth 25). In a battle of political/personal, patriotic/private, and socialized/natural masculinities, Munro's imperial, military patrilineage seems to have won out over his presumed, and Saki's oft-voiced, non-heterosexuality. Carey notes:

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[80] Stern argues, in a rather convoluted fashion, that Saki renounced his dandy characters because he wished to "forestall any such accusation during the war" that his stories were "deplorable frivolity" and, continuing to see Munro and Saki purely in terms of their narrative tone and assumed relationship to the reader, that Munro wrote as "Saki" in the *Fortnightly Gazette* because he was so used to the "double bind" of his narrative "attitude" that "even after rejecting the imposture he continued to preserve its trappings" (291). Stern's argument, which focusses on Saki's epigrammatic wit and his Reginald and Clovis stories, sees Munro's retention of the pseudonym "as a gesture of self-denigration, a way of emphasizing how thoroughly the war had transformed him" (291), without seeing that Munro-Saki, in *When William Came* for instance, had already been anticipating the war, exhibiting a masculine anxiety, and disguising, through fictional narration, an exhortation to become a certain type of patriotic man.

> Another consideration which may have inclined Hector to conceal his homosexuality was fear of hurting or offending his father . . . When she admits destroying Hector's letters, Ethel adds that it was to prevent their father seeing them. The Munros had been for generations a military family, loyal servants of empire, and a son might justifiably feel trepidation about owning up to tendencies that could bring such a clan into disrepute. (xiii)

During Munro's lifetime, "there flourished in the public schools of Britain, it has been suggested, the last indigenous romantic ideal – Imperial Manliness" (Mangan 175), but such imperial masculinity and its apparently threatening opposite, same-sex love, were subtly interwoven. In a typically Foucauldian paradox, boys' public schools forbade homosexuality and preached patriotism while providing fertile ground for same-sex desire to flower: "the very institutions that were supposed to protect men from effeminacy were the ones where same-sex practices flourished. After all, Greek and Roman texts were at the core of the public school curriculum, and they were the place where one might find some treatment of same-sex passion" (Sinfield 65). Indeed, Uranian poetry and other homoerotic writings around the turn of the century showed "the virtues of same-sex passion as elaborated and eroticized versions of the standard public school virtues – service, physical vigour, hero-worship and personal loyalty. The school ethos was seized for just those purposes which it was supposed to be repudiating" (65-66). While British "imperialism staked . . . a high claim on a specific kind of [unitary, adventurous, patriotic] masculinity to perpetuate its aims" and "British culture invested . . . much energy in glamorizing male heroes" (Bristow 225), Munro-Saki, in *When William Came*, presents Yeovil as an aspiring but impotent hero who likely serves as an example for Munro to avoid. Munro's "An Old Love" and Munro-Saki's "Pau-Puk-Keewis" attack those who are apathetic or pacifist about war, dehumanizing them as less than men and merely creatures of inaction and passive comfort. Munro writes, in a March 5, 1915 letter to his sister, that being in the army at the moment was like "being boy and man at the same time" ("Biography" 701) and "An Old Love," in its obsession with boyhood war games turned manly reality, suggests Munro's wish to reconcile the imperial military imaginings of a Victorian boyhood culture with an Edwardian patriarchy. And if not in Munro's adulthood, then certainly not long after World War I, non-boys-turned-non-men were seen as threats "to the foundations of the state," for "the homosexual was constructed as a potential traitor, one who would betray his country for sexual favours" (Bristow 88). Munro-Saki's rebuttal of previous endorsements of "unmanly" sexuality can be seen as an attempt to forestall notions, in place by "the 1930s . . . [that] the pervert could in no way be a patriot" (88) and Munro, who seems to have seized the "opportunity to prove himself in war with boisterous eagerness," likely "saw his own valour as somehow atoning for or justifying" his unorthodox masculinity (Carey xxiii). If camp "finds a way to live within [dominant society] and knows that its salvation is not found in that dominant society" (Bergman 108), Munro betrays Saki's camp by not only enlisting to fight for Edwardian England, but enlisting Saki to proclaim that Munro's salvation lay in defending King and country with one's life.

Thus, as Lane notes, the dandyism of pre-1913 Saki "connect[s] with the fascistic fantasies and military violence" that Saki espouses in *When William Came* and that Munro spits out in "An Old Love" (218); such "militarism . . . sought to redeem through (hyper)masculinity the effeminate and urbane excess of his nom de plume" (218-19). Similarly, if Munro was gay, he likely sought to both repress and displace his homosexuality by immersing himself in a male-bonding military culture, channeling his same-sex desire into a patriotic fervour for war (and killing other men).[81] An examination of Saki's queerer stories leads one from camp and unconventional masculinities to

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[81] Of course, in a Foucauldian manner, the macho camaraderie of the military, in its very homosociality, produces homosexual panic, which is often viciously repressed and displaced into homophobia. Langguth notes that, according to Travers, "the editors [at John Lane] gossiped that Munro had chosen to enter the ranks because his inverted tastes would find the pickings easier there" (251), and perhaps it was in part because of such speculation and/or self-doubt that Munro conflated himself with Saki in his overcompensating, pro-military diatribes in 1915. The soldier Munro's attempt to utterly stifle any notion of unmanly, unpatriotic sentiments in Saki is an attempted reversal of the trajectory of a Clovis tale. In "The Match-Maker" (circa 1910), the self-absorbed dandy staves off his mother's hampering of his lifestyle by getting her to marry again, this time to a "'military Johnny'" returned from "'the Indian frontier'" who is "'shy and diffident with women'" (108). This prospective husband seems to be intent on signing up Clovis to a position in the colonies, but Clovis, with a languid motion of his right eyelid, suggests, to his friend the reader, his campy resistance to such manly imperialism (108).

Munro-Saki's anxious attempt to assert his patriotic manliness by having a sexually subversive Saki not only recant his position (by criticizing his earlier dandy protagonists) but voice Munro's pro-war, anti-pacifist, overtly macho rhetoric, a rhetoric on which Munro acted, embracing a fatal patriotism by fighting for his fatherland in World War I and sacrificing his private life for a brief, patriotically masculine life as a defender of the very society with which Saki seems disillusioned until 1913 when, after attacking Munro's society from within, Saki is attacked and co-opted from within by Munro, metamorphosing, starting with *When William Came*, from the Edwardian gentleman/savaging authorial beast Munro/Saki into the confused man-author-patriot-soldier Munro-Saki. And so the "unknown boy" surrenders his selves not for others, but for an ideal "other" self — a self borne of courageous, "stiff upper lip," manly British imperialism — that he wants to become, leaving what he revises as a beastly sub-man behind and pretending to transform himself into a super-Englishman.

The Edwardian literary period was, to a certain extent, a time of split identities, as Rose outlines in *The Edwardian Temperament, 1895-1919*: "the Divided Self was . . . a minor theme in Edwardian literature" (200). The private gentleman Munro's expression of self- and same-sexualities through the fictional mask of a dandy-endorsing Saki was a reversal of the "double life of an Oscar Wilde, concealing his real self behind a flamboyant public persona" (206). Saki's authorial persona may well have been moulded by the Decadents' notion of artistic expression, for Wilde's

> second self . . . was more than just a camouflage for his homosexuality: it was the artistic product of what the Decadents called 'the Doctrine of the Mask.' According to this theory, 'being oneself' is either an impossibility or a bore. The human personality cannot freely blossom and develop of its own accord, Wilde argued; it has to be constructed deliberately, like a work of art. The so-called real self, unformed and uninteresting, needs a beautiful false front. One must therefore

> create a second self, a mask for presentation to the outside world, as Wilde did when he invented his outlandish aesthetical 'pose' [cf. "The Decay of Lying"] . . . (206-07)

Wilde's "posing somdomite," in the Marquess of Queensberry's accusation, was, ironically, exposed and legally proscribed, leading to the stripping away of Wilde's mask, his humiliation, conviction, infamy, and death, and essentially superimposing the social identity of the deviant male "homosexual" onto the notion of the dandy. It was, in part, this unorthodox, unacceptable male sexuality that Saki voiced with his particular nature of camp and use of campy nature — stories which mixed Ovidian settings and metamorphosis to show the triumph of self- or same-sex love over heteronormative Edwardian society — but as World War I approached, Munro began to conflate himself with and co-opt Saki in order to author-itatively rebut such queer notions of masculinity. Other writers of the time, too, distanced their literary selves from their personal lives: "Beerbohm, Yeats, Chesterton, Bernard Shaw, James Joyce, Augustus John—each of them assumed a colorful mask for presentation to the general public. At the same time they were all able to avoid or overcome the personality split that afflicted so many Victorian writers" (209). Munro, however, could not successfully bridge the chasm of anxious masculinity that yawned between his private self and his authorial persona.

The Foucauldian way in which homosexual identity was produced — not only in spite but because of repressive English public school culture, media coverage, and legal punishment of "sodomites" such as Wilde — meant that gay men (and women, though lesbians were largely overlooked altogether) came "to consciousness within a language that is continuous with the power structures that sustain the social order," as Sinfield notes, raising the inevitable question, then, of "how can [homosexuals] conceive, let alone organize, resistance? If deviant identities are produced by the dominant ideology in ways that police sexualities, containing dissidence, how is a radical lesbian or gay identity to arise?" (15) Camp is usually a form of rebellion that humorously and wryly chafes at the system while inviting affectation of and affection for its exaggerated sense of comic remedying; today camp has, to a great extent, been absorbed into mainstream culture and sapped of its outsider, rebellious sexual politics, its internally understood rebellious jokes and subversive irony diluted into accessible, pop-culture self-parody and silliness (witness the 1990s and early twenty-first century success, for instance, of 1950s and '60s TV shows remade as campy movies or the arch TV series *Desperate Housewives*). Saki's style of camp is, in the post-Wilde decades of Edwardian England, coyly covert yet shifting, vicious, and uncooperative, making Munro-Saki's later denial of and attack on it all the more treacherous. Auntly society does not actively tame the wild, "unknown boy"; the fierce rebel, eager to fit into society, denies his nature and joins the enemy. Saki's selves-defeat and Munro's enlistment of Saki to turn his back on his campy characters and stories, eating his own literary young, is a disheartening example of, as Sinfield explains, Foucault's supposition that the outcome of such dependent dissidence will be

> the exploitation and incorporation of the subordinate. . . . 'Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power' [*History of Sexuality, Volume 1* 95-96]. So dissidence may seem always fatally implicated with that which it aspires to oppose. Even attempts to challenge the system help to maintain it; in fact, those attempts are distinctively complicit, in so far as they help the dominant to assert and police the boundaries of the deviant and the permissible. It begins to seem that any move we make has been anticipated by the power system – you only dig yourself in deeper. Dissidence plays into the hands of containment. (Sinfield 15)

Munro/Saki genuinely tried to avoid such containment by dominant Edwardian heterosexual society through the articulation of subversive views by an authorial persona in stories that masked rebellion by gaining the reader's sympathy (although Saki's successes are mitigated by the attacks on women as promoters of heterosexual marriage, condemnations quite palatable to a patriarchal society; see Chapter 2) and cloaking the stories' sly messages of revolt in dandy wit, pranks and hoaxes, fantastical metamorphoses, and macabre plots. But with Munro-Saki's confusion, backtracking, and selves-repudiation, a militant Munro effectively contained and stifled Saki, in the end, by trying to fit himself into a convenient, easy framework: the pre-existing, heteronormative, manly, patriotic culture of imperialist, late-Victorian and Edwardian England.

While Munro and Saki would likely have lived on and written long after the war if Munro and Saki hadn't displaced and revolted against the same-sexuality they endorsed, once a tangled Munro-Saki defended the "old love" of patriotism, in the process denouncing a "new love" which Saki had slyly voiced in some of his stories, Saki was subsumed and partly cannibalized by an anxiously masculine, fervently nationalistic Munro. Saki had died long before Munro was felled by a bullet in November 1916. For all the uniquely sly and macabre, subversive and violent nature of Saki's camp, Munro's reliance on a jingoistic, masculine identity quelled the author-narrator's literary rebellions in the first and most sudden of Munro-Saki's ultimately confusing, imploding ends to their dependent dissidence, a selves-defeat that recalls Nathaniel Hawthorne's adage: "No man, for any considerable period, can wear one face to himself and another to the multitude, without finally getting bewildered as to which may be true."

Chapter 2

"THE THREAT"

Anti-Auntness, Misogyny and Anti-Suffragettism in Saki's Fiction

Jack: You seem to think that every aunt should be exactly like your aunt! That is absurd!

§

Algernon: My dear boy, I love hearing my relations abused. It is the only thing that makes me put up with them at all. Relations are simply a tedious pack of people, who haven't got the remotest knowledge of how to live, nor the smallest instinct about when to die.

— Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, 1894 (published 1895)

"Mr. Gay," said Nellie . . . "once said to me that man was essentially imperfect until he was married."

"It is true," I agreed. "And woman until she is dead."

— Anthony Hope, *The Dolly Dialogues*, 1894

"These neurotic women clamour for a vote. What they need is a fire hose."

"The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world, but women who smash windows need the birch."

"They need straitjackets, not the franchise."

"Why not put them in a room, one at a time, say for about an hour, with half a dozen mice?"

— excerpts from *Daily Express* readers' letters about suffragettes, c. 1913

Saki's apparent misogyny and obvious anti-suffragettism are more complex, contradictory, paradoxical, and puzzling than they seem. Saki never evinces a clear dislike of all females in his fiction, saving his contempt mostly for matrimony-promoting wives and aunts who uphold the institution that perpetuates and consolidates the power structure of bourgeois and aristocratic heteronormative society; the author-narrator often endorses young girls who are pranksters and tricksters, and even sympathizes with young, angst-ridden wives in two tales. Yet Saki remains unable to sympathize with the more serious political agitation of the women's suffrage movement, which he viciously attacks in a handful of stories. Munro's childhood, where his mother figures were strict aunts, seems to be channelled by Saki into anti-aunt narratives while Saki's camp sensibility often posits women as viragos who wish to tame and contain self- or same-sexual men in marriage.

MUNRO'S AUNTIE-ESTABLISHMENT

Saki's misogyny has been passed off by some critics as the redirected antipathy towards women that a homosexual man, as Munro may have been, might be expected to exhibit, stemming from memories of his harsh upbringing by two aunts, the typical feelings of a man of his time, or some combination thereof. Sinfield notes that "Boy-love was often misogynist" (115) and, in his book on camp, Booth writes:

> Psychologists claim that effeminate men often nurture feelings of hostility, envy and revenge towards the women they mimic. Not daring to attack directly, they are surreptitiously spiteful. They secretly despise women . . . The effeminate man is a caricature of the traditionally feminine woman, belittling her and exaggerating the artificial elements in her personality to the extent that they become ludicrous. The purely nominal nature of some traditionally feminine gentleness is shown up: the effeminate man is openly bitchy. The teeth and the nails waiting to ambush from somewhere within the softness of the Eternal Feminine are mutated in camp into fangs and claws that can no longer remain hidden. (97, 99)

Such large psycho-sexual claims are often suspect generalizations derived from notions that effeminate men are somehow jealous of not being feminine, like women. The more Freudian concept of a boy's yearning for his mother seems to be more relevant to Munro, whose attitudes to women may stem from his childhood.

With the death of his mother during his infancy, Munro's mother-figures became, primarily, Aunt Agatha and Aunt Tom (Charlotte), whose raising of Munro and his brother and sister in Broadgate Villa seemed to be austere, harsh, and loveless. Ethel Munro disputed any cruel element of Saki's fiction and thus any cruelty in his upbringing in a series of epistolary exchanges with Graham Greene via *The Spectator* in June 1952 (in response to Derek Hudson's review of Greene's anthology *The Best of Saki*), writing that by no means did she and her brother have a "'miserable childhood'" (June 13, 1952; quoting Hudson), even though she states in the first page of her 1924 biography that, "judged by modern methods, our bringing up was quite wrong" (637). She assures Greene that it was "intensely exciting" (June 13, 1952) and that Saki, as she referred to her brother, had a "strict upbringing" (June 27, 1952). Her biography certainly offers many reasons for Saki to turn Munro's disciplinarian aunts into the tyrannical guardian-figures of his fiction:

> . . . on rainy days we were kept indoors.
>
> Also fresh air was feared, especially in winter; we slept in rooms with windows shut and shuttered, with only the door open on to the landing to admit stale air. All hygienic ideas were, to Aunt Augusta, the Autocrat, 'choc rot,' a word of her own invention. (638)
>
> Our pleasures were of the very simplest—other children hardly came into our lives—once a year, at Christmas, we went to a children's party, where we were not allowed to eat any attractive, exciting-looking food, "for fear of consequences," and in *case* the party might have done us harm, Granny gave us hot brandy and water on our return. (638)
>
> Our grandmother, a gentle, dignified old lady, was entirely overruled by her turbulent daughters, who hated each other with a ferocity and intensity worthy of a bigger cause. (639)
>
> [Aunt Tom] had no scruples, never saw when she was hurting people's feelings . . . (639)[82]

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[82] Aunt Tom may have "adored [young] Hector as long as he kept off the flower-beds and out of the kitchen garden" ("Biography" 640), but Munro's experience with her, at least on an August 1901 train trip to Edinburgh he described in a wry letter to his sister, could be embarrassing and harrowing:

> There are times when I almost wish Aunt Tom had never had a mother. Nothing but a merciful sense of humour brought me through that intermittent unstayable outpour of bemoaning. . . .
>
> . . . Then we came here, and she took rooms after scolding the manageress, servants and entire establishment nearly out of their senses because everything was not to her liking. . . .
>
> Aunt Tom really is marvellous; after 16 hours in the train without a wink of sleep, and an hour spent in hunting for rooms, her only desire is to go out and see the shops. She says it was a

> The other aunt, Augusta, is the one who, more or less, is depicted in 'Sredni Vashtar' . . . She was the autocrat of Broadgate—a woman of ungovernable temper, of fierce likes and dislikes, imperious, a moral coward, possessing no brains worth speaking of, and a primitive disposition. Naturally the last person who should have been in charge of children. (640)

Neither aunt, it seems, would have been too loving a guardian for any child in his or her most formative years. These were Munro's female role models and surrogate parents, so it is little surprise that Saki easily tapped into the late-Victorian literary vein of anti-auntness:

> By the end of the 19th century, the British aunt, who throughout the century has been demonstrating and producing cultural conformity, has herself become an 'other.' As the prevailing English cultural and sexual hegemony of the age of Victoria becomes challenged at the *fin de siècle*, it is as if the aunt, as its representative decapitated head, has been impaled in the public square for ridicule. Divested of the power that made her fearsome, she has instead become an object of fun. (Palmer 189)

As Palmer notes, Wilde, too, in *The Importance of Being Earnest*, "plays with a vengeance around not only the exaggerated aunt figure but everything she represents: marriage, heterosexuality, family, social hierarchy, class values, materiality, and certainty" (190). Indeed, Saki slyly notes his own lack of reverence for the Victorian aunt-figure in his playlet "The Baker's Dozen":

> Maj.: . . . You don't suppose there's any depravity in me, do you?
> Em.: It sometimes skips a generation, you know. Weren't any of your family bad?
> Maj.: There was an aunt who was never spoken of.
> Em.: There you are!
> Maj.: But one can't build too much on that. In mid-Victorian days they labelled all sorts of things as unspeakable that we should speak about quite tolerantly. (92)

The mere satirizing of the aunt-figure, then, is a rebellion against Victorian convention and, perhaps, Munro's vicarious rebellion, through his literary persona, against his

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remarkably comfortable journey; personally I have never known such an exhausting experience. (675-76) surrogate mothers. Munro's real mother was run over by a cow and Ethel notes that Aunt Augusta was afraid of the creatures (638), perhaps because of that reason; indeed, the aunts, unlike their charges, "did not care at all for animals" (641). As Carey notes, this bovine-induced tragedy seems significant, given Saki's "preoccupation with animals that attack women" (ix); these attacks are both imaginative recreations and reworkings of Mary Munro's death — perhaps helping her son to deal vicariously with the loss — and fantasies of surrogate-mothers' deaths. Ethel Munro herself notes that Aunt Augusta and Aunt Tom were "guilty of mental cruelty: we often longed for revenge" (642).

Saki's stories, perhaps reflecting Munro's absence of or yearning for his mother, do not show the defeat of a mother as often as they revel in the defeat of aunts or other female guardian figures by fate, animals, and children: Gabriel-Ernest's unorthodox sexual appetite is ignorantly endorsed by Van Cheele's foolish aunt; in the much-anthologized "Sredni Vashtar," Conradin's revered polecat-ferret kills his strict cousin-guardian Mrs. De Ropp after she kills Conradin's pet Houdan hen, echoing Munro's childhood loss of a favourite Houdan cock ("Biography" 642); in "Adrian," the title character increasingly frustrates a friend's aunt who takes him under her wing; Vasco Honiton blackmails his aunt in "The Treasure-Ship"; a bachelor shows a boring aunt how to be "The Story-Teller" to her niece and two nephews; Nicholas disobeys, traps, and ultimately quiets his authoritarian, "*soi-disant* aunt" in "The Lumber-Room," a woman who, Ethel Munro writes, "is Aunt Augusta to the life" (640), while Broadgate Villa had a "mysterious room" like the one in the story (641); "The Disappearance of Crispina Umberleigh," reports her nephew, turns out to be a pleasant absence. For many of Saki's characters, then, the "'beginning of their tragedy was that they found an aunt'" (*The*

Penguin Complete Saki 173). Palmer argues, in fact, that Saki slays the dragon aunt because she is the "bastion of an institutionalized Toryism, [and] provokes a defiant political response to all the dying Victorian social clichés and traditional moral imperatives" (192), thus countering many critics, such as Otto or Gillen, who see Saki as a conservative, Tory-supporting satirist.

Munro's troubled experience of family and authority as aunt-based and matriarchal seems to metamorphose into Saki's biting, rebellious attitude to aunts, which in turn likely shapes his general attitude to women in his fiction, where they are often seen attempting to tame and conform free, single men. Saki "displays a revulsion against domesticity and regimentation, both auntly ideals" (221), and the placidity that

> wild things disrupt in Saki's stories is for the most part simply humdrum home life . . . At the root of this soul-destroying respectability lies woman. It is she, according to Saki, who tames the wild, adventurous male, and condemns him to the meek roles of husband and bread-winner. (Carey vii-viii)

According to Ethel Munro (677), "The Sex That Doesn't Shop" is a story inspired by Aunt Tom that Saki expands into a generalization about women as impractical shopaholics (at a time when women "had become a [consumer] market" [Crow 13]), while in "Sredni Vashtar," Conradin privately refers to his guardian as "the Woman." The author-narrator notes, in "Adrian," that "Susan Mebberley was a charming woman, but she was also an aunt" (141) and, finally, that since she "was a woman as well as an aunt, saw that she would have to be allowed to have her own way" (142). If Saki's misogyny is a displacement of fear, as with most prejudices, then Saki may well be expressing Munro's childhood fear of his aunts and his sense of the "threat of women [who] commanded domestic power . . . their control in the home was seen as a potential threat to male dominance" (Rutherford 7). Such a fear may have been linked to Munro's possible non-heterosexuality. For a young man who, for a few terms, went with other expected future servants of the empire to Bedford Grammar School, "among the most prominent centers of education for older British-Indian boys" (Buettner 154; see also 165-66 and 232-33), but failed to follow in his father's footsteps as a policeman in Burma because of his frail health (often noted in his sister's memoir) — while his brother Charlie remained in the post until he later moved to Ireland, becoming governor of a Dublin prison there — Munro likely had an early, recurring anxiety of not living up to an idealized, imperial masculinity. His upbringing, then, until he was 12 (under a grandmother and two aunts, and with an older sister) meant that Munro's Victorian bourgeois family was gendered mainly as female, although "the aunts' ferocity" was a continuation of the Munro patriarchy's "martial temperament in an age when women found few acceptable outlets" for such an attitude (Langguth 10). The succeeding, "punitive regime of the boarding school was the cultural enforcement of the castration complex which would 'smash to pieces' the boy's attachment to his mother" or maternal figures (Rutherford 22-23; after Freud, "Some Psychical Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes"), but it was also a place of homosocial bonding and, often, homoerotic desire. Thus Munro's upbringing and education simultaneously enforced patriarchy and effeminacy. Munro's enlistment, years later, can be seen both as an attempt to deny any effeminacy by joining the ranks of his father's and brother's imperial masculinity, and an implicit admission of an unorthodox, same-sex masculinity that edges into homosocial- and emasculation-anxiety.

Munro's loss of his mother may also have led, unconsciously, to his need for acceptance by the nation-state and his embrace of military manliness with the coming of the war. Rutherford explains Rupert Brooke's fascist military transformation as, in part, an escape from his mother, but Munro's eager enlistment may also have been an attempt to follow in his father's footsteps and thus re-establish clearly separated gender spheres, asserting the absence of effeminacy (his own?) in his defence of the nation-state. Men go off to fight, while women stay at home; thus Munro's soldierly duty was a denial of patriarchy-aspiring, mother-substituting aunts and a replication of his father's role, suggesting a desire to set himself in opposition to, and so recover, his mother. As Rutherford writes,

> imperialism offered an outlet for an infantile unbounded desire. The son's sacrifice of his own life for his mother would not be wasted if history afforded him the omnipotence he longed for. The imperial mission, the 'white heights' of English manliness, gave him the opportunity to escape from his servitude by transferring his identification to the creed of a brotherhood in service to a higher cause. Imperialism became a divinity, an autoerotic pleasure offering itself as an object of love.
>
> This transfer of ego-subordination from the mother to an imperial mission cultivated a demand for individual sacrifice and a tantalising culture of the will to power. (34)

Saki's celebration of the young dandy and rebellious boy may also reflect a rebellion against the "patriarchal institution of motherhood [aunthood in Munro's case] and the fraught relationship of boys to it, which contributed to the making of a late Victorian masculinity characterised by narcissism, emotional immaturity and a preoccupation with self-sacrifice: qualities that found a popular expression in the first years of the twentieth century in the figure of Peter Pan – the Englishman as the eternal adolescent" (Rutherford 7). At a time when society's construction of femininity "reinforced the Victorian conception of masculinity, and helped to maintain the system of dividing the moral, intellectual and emotional universe into separate spheres" (Gorham 209), Saki's attacks on matrimony-promoting aunts and husband-hunting ladies seem like conservative, paranoid efforts to make sure the spheres stay clearly separate. Just as "Carol Christ has argued that the kind of literary ideals of femininity which were elaborated . . . by writers such as Ruskin, Coventry Patmore and Tennyson can best be understood as reflecting the deep ambivalence many male writers felt about their own gender identity and hence their sexuality" (Dyhouse 128), so too does Saki's ambivalence towards women suggest Munro's dissatisfaction with his masculinity. The long separate personas of Munro and Saki may have been convenient compartmentalizations of an ambivalence about women, with Munro's lingering resentment of his maternal-substitute, tyrannical aunts and his sense of allegiance with similarly oppressed children refracted by a dandy-endorsing-turned-effeminacy-rejecting Saki into anti-aunt narratives, frequent sympathy for girls and young women, and consistent anti-suffragettism. Yet the regimented, unemotional world of the faux-patriarchy which raised Munro was a world to which he would return himself and in which he would enlist Saki when he became a soldier. Langguth writes that, if Aunt Tom was the "goad to much of [Saki's] best work, a compelling incentive for remaining detached and amused throughout [Munro's] prolonged youth," she was also "a model during [Munro's] middle age, when he turned intolerant and martial" (Langguth 256).

Palmer suggests that Saki's attitude towards aunts discloses an ambivalence about imperialism, which benefited Munro's patriarchal side of the family but also kept him from his father, thrusting him into the care of strict aunts. Thus Saki's "protagonists object strongly to the position of being in any way the colonized, rather than the colonizing, power, particularly when the colonizer is female" (221). Saki, through his protagonists, objects to women wielding power and emasculating the patriarchy. Booth maintains that "the aunts in Saki" are examples of the "Phallic Woman" (130) who is often grotesque, aggressively dressed, and domineering, while Palmer notes that the

> power they represent is a patriarchal one. Like Queen Victoria, they may bear the title of empress, but the guns behind the imperial forces, and the government agencies that buy and deploy them, are wielded by men. The menacing dragon aunts are paper dragons: underneath their female face-masks are male authors, male editors, and male publishers. The real Victorian aunts at this period control only a tiny fraction of the nation's wealth; they cannot yet cast an election ballot. Those who slay the dragons are themselves the colonialist powers, rather than the colonized. (228)

Saki displaces Munro's anxiety about his imperial masculinity onto the easy targets of "paper dragon" aunts whom Munro likely saw as a faux-patriarchy which stifled, stunted, and castrated his boyhood; Saki's stories do not always show male-associated culture triumphing over aunts (as in *The Importance of Being Earnest*), but often involve typically feminine-associated nature triumphing over aunts, revealing Munro's/Saki's inversion of the typically superior/lesser binaries of culture : nature and patriarchy : matriarchy. Saki makes nature out to be an outsider, male underdog force which subverts the aunts' matrimonial culture, thereby reclaiming a victory for patriarchy over the stifling, battleaxe matriarchy. Saki's anti-aunt stories bolster the Edwardian Englishman Munro in a sort of "ego-defensive violence," whereby men "affirm their heterosexuality or masculinity by attacking someone who symbolizes an unacceptable aspect of their own personalities (e.g., homoerotic feelings or tendencies towards effeminacy)" (Herek 348).

SAKI'S AUNTIE-MARRIAGE AVOWALS

Saki's misogyny arises, then, from an anti-aunt concern over women taming men through marriage. Aunts were promoters of "social conformity, and marriage" (Palmer 199), but in many of Saki's stories, the two ideas are indistinguishable. Aunts are often the stern moral arbiters and guardians of the heterosocial order, as in "Gabriel-Ernest," where Van Cheele is most concerned about what his aunt may think. In "The Music on the Hill," Sylvia is not a threat because she scoffs at paganism or sexual freedom, but because she believes in marriage, a stifling prison in Saki's world for men who would otherwise remain secretly gay, an asexual bachelor, or an unfettered dandy. As Booth notes, "Camp mockery also attacks relationships between the sexes more directly, particularly where marriage and the family are concerned. Camp men, confronted with the possibility of marriage, are likely to worry . . . that they might not be able to manage" (59-60). The entire first paragraph of the story is given to outlining Sylvia's small victory, which soon clearly seems to the reader to be her greatest "achievement," that of marrying Mortimer in spite of his "unaffected indifference to women" and "'settling him down'," far from his hostile family (161). Sylvia is one of Saki's first oppressive wives, hindering the imagination and freedom of their husbands, rushing to judgment or misconceptions, and concerned with pretense, habit, and convention (three aspects of bourgeois and aristocratic society which Saki consistently rails against). For Sylvia, particularly, men (heterosexual or otherwise) are to be conquered through women's sole institutional means of power — marriage, a social union so important to Western capitalist society that its three primary explicit codes (canonical law, the Christian pastoral, and civil law)

> centered on matrimonial relations: the marital obligation, the ability to fulfill it, the manner in which one complied with it, the requirements and violences that accompanied it, the useless or unwarranted caresses for which it was a pretext, its fecundity or the way one went about making it sterile, the moments when one demanded it . . . its frequency or infrequency, and so on. . . . The marriage relation was the most intense focus of constraints; it was spoken of more than anything else; more than any other relation, it was required to give a detailed accounting of itself. It was under constant surveillance: if it was found to be lacking, it had to come forward and plead its case before a witness. (Foucault 37)

Saki's view of women as controlling wives and marriage as oppressive of men is essentially conventional, regressive — tapping, as it does, into a long history of literature about taming shrews, early and mid-Victorian middle-class family critics' "hostile picture of the husband-hunting girl" (Gorham 53), and publicized fears about forced marriage[83] — and utterly wrongheaded. Since Munro's views of women would have been formed in his Victorian childhood and adolescence, the rarity of professional women in Saki's quasi-Victorian fictional world is not surprising (Saki's stories rarely include automobiles, telephones, or other technological or social symbols of the Edwardian era). Yet Saki, as a frequently camp writer, should be aligned with the cause of feminists in his attack on marriage, for camp "regards itself as marginal to the world that reveres industry, progress, convention, marriage and respectability—all things that traditionally have been upheld by the bourgeois male. It therefore accommodates itself to an analysis similar to the modern feminist analysis of the feminine" (Booth 54). And while "the principal forms of nineteenth-century British fiction were . . . inimical to the representation of feminist rebellion, for they inevitably moved toward or endorsed stasis, the status quo, and social integration through marriage," Saki's usually rebellious, anti-status quo, anti-marriage stories offered little scope for a "heroine's desire for independence, rebellion and social change" (Miller 4) because he targets women as the instigators and sole beneficiaries of marriage. In anti-female and anti-society satires, Saki shows women as powerful because they tamed men, even though in Victorian and even Edwardian times, the true situation was that the "ideal woman was willing to be dependent on men and submissive to them . . . She would be innocent, pure, gentle and self-sacrificing" (Gorham 4). Marriage did not in fact give women any power over men, let alone any for themselves, for

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[83] See Burstyn, Figure 7, for the reproduction of an 1880 Robida caricature that depicts female police in 1950 arresting a man for not marrying.

> Under English law, wives became the property of their husbands, ceding to them their rights to own property and to earn money; apart from a limited custody over infants, mothers had no rights to their children; husbands could sue their wives for restitution of conjugal rights and have them imprisoned if they refused sexual intercourse; they might rape their wives with impunity under the law; and they were free to indulge in extramarital sex without fear of a divorce action against them. Such a breach on the part of married women, however, constituted grounds for invalidating the contract. (Kent 88)

Many feminists, "even during the earliest years of suffrage agitation," saw the institution as helping "to perpetuate the notion of the meek, submissive, powerless woman" (81). In Edwardian years, Christabel Pankhurst "warned against marriage on the grounds that it rendered women vulnerable to venereal disease" (84), although Saki never suggested that marriage involved heterosexual intercourse, but was entirely unsexing, for the wife turned her husband into a dull slave to routine. While Saki often makes it seem as though an Edwardian woman is set on making a man of her husband, there was more than a grain of truth in New Woman novelist Mona Caird's claim that women "continued to marry . . . because there was nothing else for them, and they put the best face on it" (100).

If Munro/Saki realized that marriage also oppressed women and was essentially patriarchal, or that women had been raised in Victorian and Edwardian England to be Patmore's "angels of the hearth," Saki rarely offers any sense of matrimony's cultural obligations and traps for women in his oeuvre. E. M. Forster, in his novels which focus on women, suggests that homosexuals and women are linked "by their sexual repression, their victimization by social conventions, by simply their otherness" (Miller 47), but Saki often refuses to connect the unorthodox males and the women in his fiction, frequently pitting them against each other instead. While "misogyny . . . mars Forster's novels about men" (47), Saki's stories only show sympathy for (usually unattached) women who do not threaten the male establishment with marriage or suffrage and, like Forster, Saki "sees marriage as a symbol of the dominant heterosexual values which make him an outcast" (52); yet Munro-Saki also defends the dominant patriarchal values when they are attacked by the "lesser sex." Saki aligns matrimony, as the central unit of a stultifying, routinized heteronormative society, with women, never men, at a time when "the man who withdrew from male conviviality and spent his time at home in the company of women was exposed to the charge of effeminacy," ironically, with "his capacity for independent action . . . possibly undermined and his governance of the home surrendered to his wife" (Tosh, "The Making of Masculinities" 43). As Langguth notes, Saki's stories "always presented a home as, at its best, a small but unexclusive club with a mediocre staff and a level of conversation necessarily constricted by the fact that half the membership was women. At its worst, a home was indifference, suffocation and strife" (192), as in "Judkin of the Parcels" (date unknown; possibly first published in *Reginald in Russia*; the reflective tone and the first-person narrative suggests that it may have been written as a memoir by Munro, pre-1900), where "this trudger of the lanes" constantly brings parcels from the shops to his wife, "a wife who may, for all we know to the contrary, have had a figure once, and perhaps has yet a heart of gold–of nine-carat gold, let us say at the least–but assuredly a soul of tape" (62). Saki never satirizes those aspects of the "cult of domesticity" (Gorham 11) in which women should be "a careful mother and solicitous wife"; Saki never showed young mothers, he occasionally made older mothers the victims of pranks and jokes, and wives are rarely solicitous in Saki's fiction. In "The Holy War," for instance, Revil Yealmton and nature wreak their revenge when a wild swan kills his controlling spouse. Once again, nature is masculinized in its murderous triumph over supposedly cultured harridans and shrews.

In "The Match-Maker," Clovis maintains his independence from his increasingly bossy mother — "'Feminine reformations always start in on the failings of other people'" (*The Penguin Complete Saki* 107) — by setting her up with a military man. In "The Forbidden Buzzards," Clovis, betraying a disdainful attitude towards the opposite sex that is perhaps more excusable given the non-heterosexual prankster's campy and cynical outlook on human nature, explains that matchmaking is "as bad as selling a man a horse with half a dozen latent vices and watching him discover them piecemeal in the course of the hunting season" (330). In the viciously anti-female "The Secret Sin of Septimus Brope," Saki counters the sappy music-hall verses and ballads of his day with a murderously anti-romantic ditty of his own. Brope, the dull editor of *Cathedral Monthly*, has a covert, lucrative sidelight career as a poet of romantic couplets about women with odd names. These quirky refrains rapidly turn him into a virtual woman-hater, and Clovis encourages him to give full rein to his misogyny, so that he pens the following popular verse:

> 'How you bore me, Florrie,
> With those eyes of vacant blue,
> You'll be very sorry, Florrie,
> If I marry you.
> Though I'm easy-goin', Florrie,
> This I swear is true,
> I'll throw you down a quarry, Florrie,
> If I marry you.' (214)

In "Tea" (collected in the posthumous volume *The Toys of Peace*), Saki encapsulates many men's apparent disgruntlement with the routine of domestic life, where the wife's "ascendancy within the home was most evident in the drawing-room, perhaps most of all in the institution of five o'clock tea, which the journalist T. H. S. Escott [in 1885] called 'the symbol of the ascendancy of the softer over the sterner sex'" (Tosh, "The Making of Masculinities" 44). James Cushat-Prinkly, another in Saki's long line of reluctant husbands, "liked and admired a great many women collectively and dispassionately without singling out one for especial matrimonial consideration" (402). Here is someone, like Munro probably, who, along with many Edwardian men, "no longer . . . [saw marriage] as a paradigm of harmony and happiness, or even as a necessary component of a fulfilled life . . . [and so] postponed marriage until middle age, or opted to remain bachelors" (Miller 41). An assortment of Saki-esque viragos oppose his disinterest:

> His lack of initiative in this matter aroused a certain amount of impatience among the sentimentally minded women-folk of his home circle; his mother, his sisters, an aunt-in-residence, and two or three intimate matronly friends regarded his dilatory approach to the married state with a disapproval that was far from being inarticulate. His most innocent flirtations were watched with the straining eagerness which a group of unexercised terriers concentrates on the slightest movements of a human being who may be reasonably considered likely to take them for a walk. (402)

Saki's amusing comparison of these marriage-minded women to walk-inclined dogs is also a disparaging view of females who, though Saki suggests they are penned in by society, are also "matronly," single-minded, and subhuman. James, who has come into money and sees marriage as really the only "correct thing" to do with an inheritance, regards the act of proposing as a chore and the actual proposee to be of little importance. His female relatives suggest "Joan Sebastable as the most suitable young woman in his range of acquaintance . . . and James became gradually accustomed to the idea that he and Joan would go together through the prescribed series of congratulations, present-receiving . . . and eventual domesticity" (402). Even before proposing to his intended, James' world is one of diminished expectations, and he walks over to the Sebastable home "in a frame of mind that was moderately complacent. As the thing was going to be done he was glad to feel that he was going to get it settled and off his mind that afternoon" (403). Then James recalls that he is coming at tea time:

> Thousands of women, at this solemn afternoon hour, were sitting behind dainty porcelain and silver fittings, with their voices tinkling pleasantly in a cascade of solicitous little questions. Cushat-Prinkly detested the whole system of afternoon tea. According to his theory of life a woman should lie on a divan or couch, talking with incomparable charm or looking unutterable thoughts, or merely silent as a thing to be looked on, and from behind a silken curtain a small Nubian page should silently bring in a tray with cups and dainties, to be accepted silently, as a matter of course, without drawn-out chatter about cream or sugar or hot water. (403)

James' vision of a woman and future wife, then, is someone seen but not heard, a silent lady of the house, a "thing" as much of an Other as the small Nubian page (who is, like Saki's poetic namesake, a cup-bearer, and may well be the author-narrator's and Cushat-Prinkly's true object of desire, given the way in which brown boys are often sexualized in Saki's fiction; see Chapter 1). Women screen themselves behind the superficial decorum of china and silverware, their "tinkling" siren songs of trivial chatter luring prospective husbands to coast along the channels of a predictable, monotonous marital existence. So James Cushat-Prinkly drops by his cousin's apartment to avoid the trap of tea time, only to find that Rhoda is having a picnic meal, an event he finds so non-torturous that he rashly proposes marriage to her. Sure enough, however, not long after their honeymoon, the new husband "came into the drawing-room of his new house in Granchester Square. Rhoda was seated at a low table, behind a service of dainty porcelain and gleaming silver. There was a pleasant tinkling note in her voice as she handed him a cup" (405). Thus, Saki shows his reader, the life of the hounded married man begins with the sufferance of a decorous, vacuous wife uttering verbal inanities at the mundane ritual of tea. The story reduces Edwardian women to pseudo-Stepford wives who trap indifferent men in the prison of dull marriage. Saki's misogyny is most offensive here because it is so basic; the author-narrator is engaging the reader to sympathize with a protagonist who, quite simply, does not want women to have a voice with which to waste words, bore others, or clutter the air with their empty "tinkling" and "chatter".

In Saki's typical world, it is only a matter of soul-crushing time before James and Rhoda Cushat-Prinkly become Arlington and Eleanor Stringham. In "The Jesting of Arlington Stringham" (*WG*, August 20, 1910), Eleanor, a childless harpy — she "hated boys, and she would have liked to have whipped this one long and often. It was perhaps the yearning of a woman who had no children of her own." (134) — is dismayed when she hears that her husband has told the first joke of their collective life in the House of Commons. This comical break in their humourless existence grows into a rift, and when Eleanor learns that Arlington's witticisms are borrowed from Lady Isobel, she kills herself, which is Saki's humourless punchline to the tale of this colourless, ossified marriage. And if James prefers Rhoda to be silent, he can only hope that they will age into Egbert and Lady Anne who, in "The Reticence of Lady Anne" (collected in *Reginald in Russia*), never speaks because she is dead; husband Egbert does not realize this as, in their routine of marital warfare, he attempts to explain a comment that offended her at lunch.

Marriages, in Saki's universe, may be hopefully arranged, between bouts of cattiness, by a sharp-tongued Gräfin and empty-talking Baroness ("Wratislav"), wished for by a mother who wants to get some of her six daughters off her hands almost as much as she wants to get rid of a troublesome horse ("The Brogue"), or approved by the "most intractable old woman in the county of Woldshire" ("The Elk," 358) for her grandson heir, who "was of the sort who can be stolidly happy with any kind of wife" (359). Such unions either result from or are prevented by a Saki-esque *deus ex natura*. A horse brings a man and woman together, an elk kills a prospective bride, rare buzzards are used to keep a couple apart ("The Forbidden Buzzards"), a wife uses a fake dog to get her way with her husband ("Louis"), and an unimaginative, bumbling sheep of a future husband, much to the secret pleasure of the future bride's brother, falls through the ice and drowns when a dog prevents the man from rescuing him ("The Sheep"). Not only, as is common in Saki's stories, are animals shown to be no lesser than humans here, but human marriages are shown to be as strange and prey-to-fate as any animal mating ritual, while marriageable men and women (that is, older than 20 or so) are much more docile creatures of routine than Saki's beasts and super-beasts. These bourgeois or upper-class marriages are, appropriately for the time, founded on inherited wealth and property; land-owning Rupert's concern in "The Sheep" is that his inheriting sister marry someone of good stock:

> yet she must throw herself away on this pale-eyed, weak-mouthed embodiment of self-approving ineptitude. . . . Rupert had no heir . . . the property would pass in due course to Kathleen and Kathleen's husband. The Sheep would live there in the beloved old home, rearing up other little Sheep, fatuous and rabbit-faced and self-satisfied like himself, to dwell in the land and possess it. It was not a soothing prospect. (509-10)

Saki's dehumanization of this woeful specimen of humanity — he only ever calls him "the Sheep" — allows him to kill off the man as though he were an animal too weak and unfit for the natural world. Such weeding out smacks of social Darwinism or Galtonian eugenics, yet also tacitly acknowledges matrimony as a natural union, rather than a threat to masculinity, orthodox or not.

Saki's rejection of matrimony's domestic tameness reflects a wider cultural phenomenon, that of men's "refusal to marry and the flight from domesticity" (Tosh, "Domesticity and Manliness . . ." 67). The Boy Scouts movement, so central to Munro-Saki's anticipation of military manliness in *When William Came*, "was in a way the apotheosis of the revolt against domesticity" and "a popular sense of imperial mission, as that notion was understood in the late Victorian era, required a disparagement of home comforts" (68).

UNCOMMON WIVES, NEW WOMEN, AND THE DANDY

Yet for all of the shrew-dominated, claustrophobic, or hostile marriages in his fiction, from "The Reticence of Lady Anne" to the casually betraying, cold relationship between Murrey and Cicely Yeovil in his second novel, Saki was not incapable of painting a rosier picture of married, heterosexual love. In "'Down Pens,'" a wife and husband discuss the yearly annoyance of writing holiday thank-you notes; the wife's resigned concern for propriety nicely complements her husband's hopeful rebelling against the tedious habit, and an interesting portrait of a marriage emerges through the conversation, with the spouses acting as a genial comic duo in Saki's story. "The Pond" (*The Bystander*, February 21, 1912), though, is Saki's only story to cast matrimony in a multi-hued light, humanizing the wife to the point of pathos in what is otherwise a comic tale.[84] Mona, one of Saki's over-romanticizing female characters (see below; Mona is the opposite of Emma Ladbruk, who scoffs at death in "The Cobweb"), imagines herself to be a tragic figure, and her name, black hair, and dress seem to suit her outlook on life ("Six Uncollected Stories . . ." 281). Saki gives a brief nod to the hard truth of the time that many women cannot choose whom they marry — a fortune-teller informs Mona that she "'will marry the man of [her] choice'" (281) — but also slips into animalistic wording when he notes that, in her marriage to John Waddacombe, "Mona had mated herself with a man who shared none of her intimacy with the shadowy tragedies of what she called the half-seen world" (281). Saki sees the marriage from Mona's point of view, however, not John's, and their different mindsets mean that Mona, no doubt like many new brides of her time and class, "made the tragic discovery that she was yoked to a life-partner with whom she had little in common, and from whom she could expect nothing in the way of sympathetic understanding" (282). Still, in an understated way that, for Saki, remains the most positive description of a marriage in his fiction, "John was fond of her in his own way, and she, in her quite different way, was more than a little fond of him" (282). While it is Mona who feels especially unappreciated and thus the marriage is a self-fulfilled prophecy — she "set out on her life with the expectation of being misunderstood, and after a while John arrived at the rather obvious conclusion that he didn't understand her" — Saki also shows Mona as a wife who does not wish to control or tame her husband, but is an intuitive, feeling woman who is "perturbed about their lack of soul-fellowship" (282).

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[84] Curiously, both Saki's story of the flapper Beryl and this complex, positive marriage story are two of the six stories that were never anthologized by Ethel Munro or Saki's publishers in *The Toys of Peace* or *The Square Egg* (Langguth surmises that Munro and John Lane The Bodley Head used Munro/Saki's own files, rather than those of the British Library).

The sympathetic, full-blooded Mona is worlds apart from one of Saki's ogresses and instead reveals how much marriages could mean to an Edwardian woman, with this sole social ritual and legal process in which women had an important role offering them fulfillment, validation, and happiness. It is Mona who becomes "dull, unoccupied, and immoderately happy" (282) in the relationship, as Saki begins to tease out the dynamic of a hopeful bourgeois marriage that is slowly coming undone. In one of her moody walks, Mona comes across "a dark, evil-looking patch of water" which is the antithesis of the Ovidean pools amid sunlit glades that lie at the heart of Saki's campy, homoerotic tales. The Ophelia-like woman becomes fascinated with what should be a *bete noire* of a place; in a reversal of Mortimer's pilgrimages to Pan's altar in "The Music on the Hill," most of Mona's "walks led her to the beechwood, and the Mecca of the wood was always the still dark pond, with its suggestion of illimitable depths, its silence, its air of an almost malignant despondency" (283). Here is a dark, brooding woman in Saki's fiction who does not want to conquer or lord over her husband, does not hate the country, and will not, like Munro's male figures, lapse into a dandy-ish languour, but simply wants to give up on life; Mona, absorbed in her gloomy outlook on the world, does not want to work on saving her marriage or reconciling her and her husband's different personalities. Indeed, Saki dedicates a paragraph to Mona's suicidal musings on ending her life in the pond, a description that stands out as the author-narrator's most heartfelt examination of despair and loneliness.

Mona soon postpones her bemoaning when her husband falls ill and she can eagerly slip into her social role as wife, tending to John and "fighting with greater zeal against the death that threatened her husband than she had shown in combating the suggestion of self-destruction that had gained so insidious a hold on her" (284). Saki then makes a curiously lifelike break in this tale of twinned life-and-death impulses, stolid pragmatism vs. overly active imagination, and the dangerous "undercurrent" of all-consuming *ennui* and self-pity that is part of Mona's "nature" (284), showing how domestic love can change. Mona finds her convalescing husband "far more lovable and sympathetic than he had been in the days of his vigour. The barriers of reserve and mutual impatience had been broken down, and husband and wife found that they had more in common than they had once thought possible" (284); as a mark of the positive influence of a partner in a marriage, Mona herself begins to recover and forget about her obsession with the pond. Then, coming across the gloomy spot again one day, Mona ironically begins to slip into the pond at the very time in the life when she least wants to die:

> The hideous pool, whose fascination she had once courted and slighted, was gaping in readiness for her; even if she had been a swimmer there would have been little chance for her in those weed-tangled depths, and John would find her there, as once she had almost wished—John who had loved her and learned to love her better than ever; John whom she loved with all her heart. She raised her voice to call his name again and again, but she knew that he was a mile or two away . . . (285)

The deathly water, masculinized as though it were a lover Mona was once tempted by, now swallows her up as Mona's solipsistic fatalism had threatened to, but in her last moments Mona realizes, in wording that simultaneously hints at her over-romanticizing of her own thoughts and yet affectingly reveals the sincere romantic love she feels for her husband in their re-union (a husband who, Saki notes in sharp contrast to his usually indifferent husbands, had to change for his wife, "learn[ing] to love her better"), just how much she cares for the man whom she had once given up on as she gave up on herself. In a typically Saki-esque twist ending and in a moment of wry comeuppance, Mona survives the near-drowning, returning home to her husband to explain that she is all splashed with mud because she slipped into, "'Well, perhaps it would be an exaggeration to call it a pond,' said Mona, with a faint trace of resentment in her voice; 'it's only about an inch and a half deep'" (286). Mona's pond was as distorted in her mind's eye as was her sense of doom, but the "faint trace of resentment in her voice" could concern her overly negative view of her marriage as much as her over-romanticizing of the pond. In a reversal of "The Music on the Hill" and "The Holy War," where masculine nature kills supposedly cultured termagants, Saki endorses the wife's point of view, showing Mona's recognition and exaggeration of masculine nature as a threat; Mona does not die because she is an uncommonly sympathetic, well-meaning wife in Saki's fiction. In a literary world usually populated by battleaxe wives, henpecked husbands, and misbegotten unions, "The Pond" is not only a surprising portrait of a complex, loving marriage but a complex, almost modern examination of the expectations and emotional freight that a woman can bring to a relationship.

Saki uniquely, and even more surprisingly, touches on a more class-conscious woman and on female sexuality in the late story "The Philanthropist and the Happy Cat" (publication date, if any, unknown; given that it is one of the last stories in *Beasts and Super-Beasts*, it was likely written in early 1914). Jocantha Bessbury is a smugly comfortable, bourgeois woman who finds herself

> in the mood to be serenely and graciously happy. Her world was a pleasant place . . . Gregory was, in his way, an excellent husband. Jocantha rather suspected herself of making him a very charming wife, and more than suspected herself of having a first-rate dressmaker.
>
> "I don't suppose a more thoroughly contented personality is to be found in all Chelsea," observed Jocantha in allusion to herself; "except perhaps Attab," she continued, glancing towards the large tabby-marked cat that lay in considerable ease in a corner of the divan. (381)

Jocantha's contentment is, in fact, complacency, and in musing on the house's snuggery, the porcelain, Chinese enamels, rugs and hangings, she sees herself, through "placid, introspective eyes", as "one of the most contented women in Chelsea" (382). Like Mona, she is caught up in the certainty of her own world and does not even realize that her relationship is passion-less, imagining it as a marriage that is "excellent" and "charming" (381); when Gregory leaves, he merely bids his wife "a playfully affectionate goodbye" and goes into the "outer world" (382), while Jocantha remains inward-looking and self-satisfied. Soon, passing from her thoughts about her creature comforts and her cosseted life, Jocantha undergoes the ritual guilt that still seizes so many middle-class people today: "she passed to the phase of gently commiserating for those thousands around her whose lives and circumstances were dull, cheap, pleasureless, and empty. Work girls, shop assistants and so forth, the class that have neither the happy-go-lucky freedom of the poor nor the leisured freedom of the rich" (382). So Jocantha, seized by "the Fairy Godmother impulse" (383), decides to comfort herself further and assuage her guilt by buying a theatre ticket for "some lonely-looking girl" in a tea shop (never mind whether or not they want to see a play). As she looks for a worthy recipient of her charity, Attab the cat stalks a sparrow in the yard. Jocantha's quarry is approached by a handsome young man whom Jocantha imagines is not too well off himself and feels "extremely sorry for him" (384). She shifts her focus to him, imagines going with him to the theatre, and perhaps returning with him; her charity seems mixed with an overwhelming attraction to the boy himself, for certainly no Edwardian middle-class wife would normally go to a play with a strange man. In an odd mixture of condescending maternal instinct and sexual lust, Jocantha begins to think that this

> Fairy Godmother business would prove far more entertaining than she had originally anticipated. The boy was distinctly presentable; he knew how to brush his hair, which was possibly an imitative faculty; he knew what colour of tie suited him, which might be intuition; he was exactly the type that Jocantha admired, which of course was accident. (384)

Try as she might to gain the boy's attention, however, he is absorbed in his book, and Jocantha returns home, a failed philanthropist, now seeing her home

> as looking dull and over-furnished. She had a resentful conviction that Gregory would be uninteresting at dinner, and that the play would be stupid after dinner. On the whole her frame of mind showed a marked divergence from the purring complacency of Attab, who was again curled up in his corner of the divan with a great peace radiating from his every curve of his body.
>
> But then he had killed his sparrow. (385)

Saki never suggests here that, as some of his critics who think him a Tory writer would have it, the poor or working-class are that way by nature and should be left so, but simply exposes the rift between the classes in Edwardian England which is only widened by wrongheaded, middle-class ideas about helping the less fortunate. The focus here is squarely on the dissatisfied Jocantha and her selfish notion of charity as a bourgeois project, a notion that, confused with sexual attraction and patronizing pity, blows up in her face. Attab is happy not just because his life is simple but because he has killed his sparrow and sated his appetite, whereas Jocantha has not only failed in her attempt at kindness (which was misguided from the outset), but failed utterly in satisfying herself and quelling an unconscious feeling of unease with her bourgeois life and passionless marriage. As Lambert notes, "'The Philanthropist and the Happy Cat' is an unexpectedly subtle study of the social and sexual frustrations of a young woman of the prosperous middle class" (41), while Katrakis points out that, for Jocantha, "it is inconceivable that anyone who is not rich can be happy. Munro implicitly satirizes her destructively innocent standpoint, warning of the folly of taking one's own ideas and needs as the yardstick of the world" (84). In this story, Saki shows how not just men, but women, too, can become "inhibited and repressed by a rigid and meaningless code of behaviour . . . easy prey to complacency and routine" (89). Yet Saki never shows those poor or middle-class working women whom Jocantha notices; women are never associated with labour or class struggle in Saki's fiction, but only with a lower class in general (as I explain below), an unsurprising oversight given that people brought up in middle-class Victorian households were not accustomed to relating "to one another outside a social-sexual context" (Burstyn 130) and so Munro would rarely, if ever, have worked with a woman.

In "A Sacrifice to Necessity" (*The Bystander*, October 15, 1913), however, in a gender twist that became more common in Saki's fiction with "The Open Window" in November 1911 (see below)~~, it~~ is a seventeen-year-old girl who maintains her independence by marrying off her mother, a middle-aged widow. Beryl Pevenly (the name suggests that it's "heavenly" to get "even") is a "'Flapper incarnate'" whom her mother Alicia woefully underestimates as merely a "'child'" ("Six Uncollected Stories . . ." 305). The splenetic elder woman nags her only child about getting up late, worries about her playing cards, and is appalled when Beryl tells her that she owes more than one thousand pounds after losing at baccarat. At this point in the story, Saki begins to upset conventional Edwardian notions of female identity, for women, particularly adolescents, were rarely associated with gambling. Beryl flippantly blames her gambling instinct on an uncle or another male ancestor, rebuts her mother's remarks with snappy witticisms, and generally "seemed determined to include her mother in any moral censure that might be applied to her own conduct" (307). Beryl explains that she owes most of the money to Ashcombe Gwent who, luckily, seems to be "'[m]atrimonially amorous'" (307);

exploiting her mother's concern for maintaining their social status, which would be jeopardized if, as her daughter notes, "'I should have to go and be a governess or typewriter or something, and you would have to do needlework. . . . we should sink suddenly to the unfortunate position of distressed gentlefolk'" (307). The target of Ashcombe's marital desire, however, is Beryl's mother, as "'Mature womanhood is his particular line'" (308). Here is a Saki-esque surprise ending that depends on the Edwardian reader's (and to a lesser extent the modern reader's) assumption that widows are figures who should not be mocked, negatively portrayed, or simply married off again on a whim; indeed, the spinster (in the sense of an unmarried or thought-to-be-unmarriageable woman) was seen "largely as an object of pity during the nineteenth century" (Bruley 14). Saki grounds "A Sacrifice To Necessity" in a clear-eyed reality for females in English society, for most single middle-class women throughout Victorian times and even into the pre-World War I years could only find work as a governess, teacher, or typist, and many marriages were not only inconvenient for women but matches that were forced onto them. For upper-class women,

> Outside employment, still less an independent career, was neither an economic necessity nor a practical possibility, the main outlet for personal activity being a perpetual round of social calls, regulated by etiquette, or some form of charitable work . . .
>
> [For middle-class women] . . . marriage and motherhood was the most likely destiny. (Powell 70)

Beryl, an incorrigible rascal, in fact reveals, with her indecent proposal, that marriage remains, first and foremost, an economic union, a financial merger and acquisition in which women were the weaker partners but for whom marriage "was their only sure means of obtaining any possibility of economic security" (Gorham 53).

In "Laura," the title character is an unrepentantly beastly person — "'I haven't been very good, when one comes to think of it. I've been petty and mean and vindictive and all that sort of thing'" (241) — and all the more shockingly so since she is a single woman who scorns her girl friend's marriage. She is determined that she will be reincarnated as an otter and then as a naked Nubian boy, and so she is, eating her girl friend's husband's prized poultry and then biting him as the otter, and throwing all of his shirts in the bath in a Cairo hotel as a "'little beast of a naked brown Nubian boy'" (245). In this female take on "Gabriel-Ernest," where Laura directly flouts the notion of virtuous womanhood and literally attacks marriage by assaulting the prim and proper husband Egbert, Saki's independent woman metamorphoses into Saki's savagely queer male figure, uniting his two versions of fiercely independent effeminacy.

Unlike Saki's aunts, Jocantha, Beryl, Laura, Vera (see below), the unnamed niece, and Lady Carlotta (see below) are unattached or childless, free-spirited, middle- and upper-class women who do not try to dominate men and are uninterested in forcing marriage on a bachelor. Saki's sympathy for the six characters also suggests an interest in the "New Woman," largely "a literary and journalistic creation" who was "a rebel: she rejected Victorian conventions of dress, behaviour, and morality . . . likely to be young, educated, probably unmarried," middle- or upper-class, working, educated, "outspoken and independent," and associated by the public with a "liberated attitude to sexual relations" (Powell 94-95). She challenged "social norms and conventional morality in order to achieve her own fulfillment – sexual, artistic, intellectual, or otherwise" (Miller 15; Saki does not, however, show his New Woman-ish characters as beautiful, desirous, or interested in sexual relations). She was a figure, then, with whom Saki's Reginald and

Clovis had much in common: both are prankster types, outsider figures who oppose society's conventional gender expectations, and both were, as critics note, allied by their *fin de siècle* enemies. Both the updated Brummell figures from the Regency and a fresh, independent, forward-looking female type of character appeared around the end of the century, a time when reactionaries regarded these literary types as signs of social decrepitude; indeed, John Lane published, along with decadent works, New Woman short stories in *The Yellow Book* and "innovative new fiction about women," leading to conservatives' criticism of "Lane's interest in such fiction" as confirmation of their "suspicions of an alliance between New Women, decadence and homosexuality" (Miller 25). While, as Joseph Stein points out, Max Beerbohm would write about the encounter of these figures twenty years later in *Zuleika Dobson* (60), both the dandy and New Woman are linked in their revisions of gender and sexual identity and their opposition to aspects of the dominant culture, with feminist and Decadent writers "frequently bracketed together . . . as a concerted (and feminized) threat to the stability of society" (Miller 26). Both types were also generally linked in the minds of many late Victorians because, to them, "the decadent was new and the New Woman decadent" (Dowling 48). Critics accused both turn-of-the-century figures, with their "male effeminacy and female mannishness" (55), of a "'Cockney' emphasis on sensation and cheap self-culture . . . [which] would not only sap the moral sense of the individual but would undermine the distinctions of class" (54). Saki's female and male tricksters are alike (in "Reginald on Worries," while disparaging an aunt who invents worries and females who act oblivious to hardship, Saki's first dandy ironically notes, in one of the sixteen stories that are based on his witty views, "Women are so opinionated" [19]). Both are "cut off from the springs of instinctive reproductive life" (56) because these wildly self-interested and independent non-conformists want nothing to do with marriage and reproducing the social norm; they refuse to meet social expectations or follow tame Edwardian conventions.

GIRLS IN SAKI'S FICTION

Although Saki rarely opposes the Victorian and Edwardian "cult of domesticity" with regard to wives and mothers but counters it with his independent female characters, the gendered, separate spheres of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Britain also depended "on an image of the ideal daughter" (Gorham 12), in part because "daughters became vehicles for the family's upwardly mobile aspirations" and, through genteel education and marrying up, would offer "evidence of the family's economic and social aspirations" (52). By 1914, "academic opportunities for bright elementary school girls were increasing" but absences remained high, for many girls were entrusted with chores, washing the family laundry, or taking care of their young siblings (Bruley 17, 16). Saki eagerly offers a clearly rebellious, alternative vision of girlhood at a time when "[t]oo much independence amongst young girls was definitely considered a dangerous thing" (Dyhouse 113). Although girls' fiction had become a genre unto itself by 1900, the field primarily included "school stories and tales of heroic action . . . holiday adventures . . . [and] career books," while Saki's unethical tricksters are obviously meant as reactions to earlier fiction for girls which "generally emphasized home life and home duties" (Mitchell 1).[85] While the vain, boyish dandies Reginald and Clovis usually come to mind as Saki's heroes, girls appear regularly as Saki's protagonists in 1912, with stories that would be collected in *Beasts and Super-Beasts* two years later, and most are young flappers or budding New Women. Their schemes, deceptions, and rebellions offer fictional blows, at least, to the reality of "most girls [who] remained enclosed in family roles and governed by traditional expectations about marriage, maternity, and appropriate feminine skills and behavior" (3). In "The Mappined Life," Saki's stand-in is an unnamed niece who not only delivers the author-narrator's basic, anti-complacency rationale for his satire (see Chapter 4), but also cynically notes her dim future:

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[85] The word "girl" first "became dramatically visible" in 1880 (Mitchell 6). For more on the emergence of girlhood as "a provisional free space" (3) in English culture between 1880 and 1915, see Mitchell.

> "One of these days somebody dull and decorous and undistinguished will 'make himself agreeable' to me at a tennis party, as the saying is, and all the dull old gossips of the neighbourhood will begin to ask when we are to be engaged, and at last we shall be engaged, and people will give us butter-dishes and blotting-cases and framed pictures of young women feeding swans." (482)

Not only, then, is it a young girl who rails against run-of-the-mill Edwardian life, but here Saki offers a rare moment of sympathy for a woman's stodgy, predictable married life.

These mischievous anti-heroines also play a trick on the typical Edwardian reader, for he or she was likely to believe the young female's innocence simply because of her gender. Saki never makes his girls tomboys or fantastical heroines; he recognizes the stiffer social reality and sets up the tales' twists by placing his girl characters in domestic situations and ostensible lady-in-waiting roles. In his classic tale "The Open Window" (*WG*, November 18, 1911), Saki introduces the reader to Framton Nuttel, a single man who is visiting his sister's acquaintances while in the country as a rest-cure for his frayed nerves. His polite hostess, a young girl, seems innocent and entirely credible, and Saki emphasizes her seeming innocuousness by only calling her a "young lady" or even a "child" (260). An astute reader well-versed in Saki may suspect, however, that the trickster figure here is not the usual bachelor, but this girl who speaks the first line of the story: “‘My aunt will be down presently, Mr. Nuttel,’ said a very self-possessed young lady of fifteen; ‘in the meantime you must try and put up with me’” (259). This seems to be the true trickster-figure of the story, and the clues are all there: she has an aunt to thwart, she has perfected the art of the disingenuously polite comment, and she is, the author-narrator repeatedly notes, quite “self-possessed” (259, 260). Yet as Framton Nuttel awaits the young girl’s aunt, Mrs. Sappleton, she tells him of her great tragedy three years earlier, when the aunt’s husband and two young brothers went out through the open French window to hunt on the moors, where they fell into a bog. “Here,” Saki notes, “the child’s voice lost its self-possessed note and became falteringly human” (260). Vera reflects on how she still thinks that the youngest brother, “‘singing, “Bertie, why do you bound?”’” to his spaniel, and the other two men “‘will all walk in through that window—’” (261). Mrs. Sappleton comes into the room, tells Framton that her husband and brothers will return from shooting soon, and talks to him while looking out “to the open window and the lawn beyond” (261). Framton, who thinks the widow delusional “on this tragic anniversary” (261), looks out the window when she says they are returning and the niece stares in horror; he sees three figures approaching and hears a man call out, “‘I said, Bertie, why do you bound?’” (262) Terrified, Framton flees while the men enter and the niece explains to them that their strange guest had developed a fear of dogs after being hunted by a pack into a fresh grave near the Ganges. “Romance at short notice,” Saki concludes, “was her speciality” (262).

Like the author-narrator’s name (a “beloved” who offers misanthropic stories), the tale-teller’s ironic name, revealed only once by her aunt when she appears, gives away the trickster: “‘I hope Vera has been amusing you?’” Vera (from the Latin “verax” for "speaking truthfully" or "truthful") and Saki amuse us with their entirely non-veracious story, and her decorous, polite attitude towards Framton and, by extension, the reader, only further his and our assumption that she is a believable, proper young lady. Yet Saki endows her with the ultimate trickster property, that of the storyteller, that person for whom, like Saki himself, "Romance at short notice was [her/his] speciality." And as she slyly suggests in her elaborate tale of the doomed hunters, as the brother teased the aunt with a refrain as he left the house, so Vera twits the heterosexist reader. If "'he always did . . . tease her, because she said it got on her nerves'" (261), then the nervy Vera and Saki tease their audience with their elaborate hoax of a story, destroying Framton's nerves and unnerving the gullible reader. Critics have noted Saki's interest in transformative space and stories-within-stories (see Chapter 4), but Saki's key transformation in this story is his altering of the reader's expectations. He naturally allies himself with the young girl, his sub-narrator who, as Ross Chambers points out, is also a "personification of narrative 'authority'" in a story that slyly notes, in its snappy ending, that short-story author Saki's "speciality" is "romance" at "short notice" (36; see Chapter 4 for further discussion of such metanarrative moments). Saki's "The Open Window" frames Vera's open window of her imagination, from which she spins a fantastic ghost story. Langguth comments:

> Making the taleteller a young girl rather than a boy also improves the joke. Girls were thought to be the more truthful sex . . . Vera was less suspect for his purposes. Indeed, in [Munro's/Saki's] mind it was a compliment to be considered an accomplished liar. Even as an adult he defended the glories of a fanciful concoction against stale reality, and he recognized that children have no power worth the name except their lies and their retreats into fantasy. (216-17)

In her passive conquest through narrative, Vera mirrors Saki more closely than the more active tricksters Reginald and Clovis. Perhaps the closeness between Saki and his girl protagonists was yet another reason for Munro-Saki to vehemently reject and mask any sense of effeminate masculinity as the war approached.

While Saki could not rely on the initial surprise of the hoodwinking female tale-teller, his affinity with Vera continues, for she pops up in four more stories. While Victorians often saw "the growing girl . . . as a problem when and where she showed signs of cherishing anything resembling autonomy" (Dyhouse 138), Saki revels in showing the romanticizing Vera's imaginative triumphs over small-minded adults. In the similar tale "The Lull" (*MP*, September 17, 1912), Vera is more active and, like many of Saki's young protagonists, uses animals to expose the docile mindset of their adult human inferiors. Vera is staying with another aunt, Mrs. Durmot, whose last name, "hard word" in French, further ironically underlines Vera's fast and loose use of the English language to deceive and shock. Latimer Springfield is the bachelor in need of a rest-cure, this time for a strenuous election campaign. Vera soon bursts into his room, asking if she can shelter a pig and gamecock there, as the local reservoir has burst. Saki has made Vera's impishness clear from the start, so the narrative delight lies in reading about Latimer's slow shattering of nerves as he is forced, Noah-like, to room with animals while waters rage outside the ark of a house. Vera even adds that thirty Boy Scouts "'came to rescue us when the water was only waist-high; then it rose another three feet or so and we had to rescue them'" (273). A more decorous, feminized, carefully separated version of the Boy Scouts, called the Girl Guides rather than Girl Scouts, had been established a few years earlier by Baden-Powell in order to "save scouting from the 'contamination' of feminine influence" (Dyhouse 110).[86] In one imaginative swoop, Vera deflates the imperial masculinity of the boys' club and rescues that impotent force of male adolescence which would, a year later in *When William Came*, become a confused Munro-Saki's symbol of possible salvation from and manly resistance to German occupation. Here, Saki still delights in a female's triumph over an aspiring, stodgy male politician, emphasizing the social expectations of teenage Vera's gender to the reader in his pointed ending, after the priggish Latimer has realized that he was tricked:

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[86] See Dyhouse 110-14 for an elaboration on Baden-Powell's and his wife's sexist defining of the Girl Guides organization in the face of the original grassroots plans for the movement; see Mitchell 119-23 for

> "I should not like to think of you as a deliberate liar," he observed coldly, "but one occasionally has to do things one does not like."
>
> "At any rate I kept your mind from dwelling on politics all the night," said Vera.
>
> Which was, of course, perfectly true. (275)

Young women, raised to be polite, truthful, and deferential in a patriarchal world, were not thought of as liars, which only makes Saki's employ of Vera as a devious story-teller more rebellious even as she exposes the sad truth of readers' stereotype of what a proper girl should be and how she should behave. A clever woman, in Munro's day, may have been expected to be "a manipulator of men, but her influence was indirect and benign" (Burstyn 33)[87]; Saki's females are often indirect and seemingly passive, and while not succubuses or vamps, they are certainly not benign opportunists and manipulators, and their schemes reveal a depth of intellect which they were assumed to lack (71). In "A Touch of Realism," Sir Nicholas tells his wife that "'the Durmot flapper, for instance,

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an elaboration on girls' enthusiastic adoption of Edwardian jingoism in their attempts to be Boy Scouts. Such efforts by girls to join the Boy Scouts may have further influenced Munro-Saki's endorsement of the movement as imperial British masculinity's last chance in *When William Came* and Munro-Saki's backlash against suffragettism.

[87] As with so many cultural myths of the time, the notion of women's passivity was even given an "empirical," "objective," scientific bent in Patrick Geddes' and J. Arthur Thomson's *The Evolution of Sex* (1889), in which the authors claim that, unlike "katabolic" male cells, female cells are "*anabolic*; passive, energy-conserving and stable" (Dyhouse 153). There were various "'biological' definitions of femininity which emphasised the physiological instability of the female organism and its constitutional liability to 'overstrain'. . . . evolutionary and eugenist thinkers . . . insisted that 'nature' was and ought to be women's 'destiny'" (161).

simply stops at nothing'" and in the charades-like game at a party, she and Cyril Skatterly leave the Klammerstein family out on the moors as an anti-Semitic re-enactment of Ferdinand and Isabella exiling the Jews. In "The Quince Tree," Vera preys on yet another aunt's sense of propriety and love of gossip so that she will not evict Betsy Mullen, a local tenant who loves her garden with its quince tree. Vera concocts an elaborate romance involving jewel-smuggling in which half the village is implicated, including the aunt's future son-in-law. Vera seizes on the aunt's promotion of respectable marriage as a weakness and the landlady allows her tenant to continue living in her cottage rent-free; she also exposes the aunt's hypocrisy in having moral scruples only when it doesn't infringe on her "ideal of what a son-in-law ought to be" (329). Vera, like Reginald and Clovis, clearly has no respect for or interest in marriage.

In "The Almanack" (*MP*, June 17, 1913), Vera appears with Clovis, uniting New Woman and dandy in a plot against gullible bourgeois and aristocratic adults. Vera comes up with the idea of making and selling an almanack that will offer general predictions for the coming year; in the humdrum ruts of Edwardian society where little changes, such predictions are easy to forecast (although the satire can be easily updated to mock modern-day horoscopes' vague predictions about our routinized world). But Vera's prediction that the hunting fields will not be safe for Jocelyn Vanner will not come true so long as Jocelyn is so cautious; Clovis comes to Vera's aid by spinning an elaborate yarn to Jocelyn about his involvement in a Balkan revolutionary plot, inciting Jocelyn to abandon the hunt and scramble off into the brush as a supposed counter-agent pursues Clovis. With the news that her prediction about Jocelyn has come true, Vera's almanack sells more copies at a higher price. Clovis' involvement in the story seems superfluous other than to assure the reader, and perhaps Saki as well, of the supremacy of the dandy in his fiction over the New Woman or young flapper. Vera, that superb romancer, could just as easily spin the fiction, but instead Clovis rides to her rescue.

In “The Boar-Pig” (*MP*, August 20, 1912), Mrs. Philidore Stossen and her daughter try to crash the Cuverings’ garden party of the season, but they find the back door locked and are then confronted by a menacing-looking boar-pig which niece Matilda Cuvering has let into the paddock they must get through in order to go around to the front. Matilda, who sits godlike in her perch on a medlar tree, surveying her victims, insists on speaking French to them at first, excuses her inaction by saying that she promised her aunt she would be good, and demands a substantial donation to the “‘Children’s Fresh Air Fund’” in return for procuring their escape (249). The boar-pig proves harmless, but not before Matilda has pocketed her fee. Saki is playing here with the notion of the good, obedient girl so important to Victorian children’s books, most of which were meant to teach children manners and good Christian values. Matilda pretends rectitude and obedience to her moral watchdog of a guardian, the ubiquitous Saki-esque aunt, in order to prolong the entrapment of indecorous, gate-crashing trespassers.

“The Story-Teller” (*MP*, September 12, 1913) tells precisely the sort of immoral story that is utterly contrary to the didactic children’s literature of nineteenth-century England. These conservative books were “written in reaction to the rise of feminism; they were fairly obvious in their intentions to instil traditional values in girls and young women” (Miller 115) and often involved the “auntly voice,” which evoked “the adult, superior in authority” and only “potentially receptive and willing to entertain and play with children” (Sircar 16, 17). A bachelor is sitting in a train car with an aunt and her three charges, a boy and two girls. The aunt, unsurprisingly, is a restrictive, domineering guardian: "Most of the aunt's remarks seemed to begin with 'Don't,' and nearly all of the children's remarks began with 'Why?'" (349). As Palmer notes, the bachelor in the story "has rejected the institution of marriage which it is the aunt's traditional role to promote. A member of a generation which resists family tradition, he is repulsed by the ordinary scene of children being socialized in a family group" (198). The aunt tells the three a story "about a little girl who was good, and made friends with every one on account of her goodness, and was finally saved from a mad bull by a number of rescuers who admired her moral character" (350).[88] The bigger of the two girls astutely asks, "'Wouldn't they have saved her if she hadn't been good?'" and concludes, "It's the stupidest story I've ever heard'" (350). The modern, amoral bachelor then takes the opportunity to best the Victorian-era manners-and-morals pedantry of the aunt's "tired illustration of the young girl and the bull[,] represent[ing] traditional society, religion, and the family" (Palmer 198), entertaining the children with his tale of goodness unrequited. He intrigues the three by introducing a girl who is wildly, improbably, and "'horribly good'," has won heavy, clinking medals for her virtue, and is the only child allowed to walk in the Prince's park (*The Penguin Complete Saki* 351). The bachelor answers the children's interrupting questions with imaginative answers, and then he tells them how a wolf stole into the park one day and pursued Bertha, whose goodness was now her misfortune, especially since, as she was hiding from the slavering predator in a myrtle bush, “she trembled” and “the medal for obedience clinked against the medals for good conduct and punctuality . . . [the wolf] dashed into the bush, his pale grey eyes gleaming with ferocity and triumph, and dragged Bertha out and devoured her to the last morsel” (353). The bachelor’s story, about a typically aunt-approved good girl who dies, is happily received by his audience:

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[88] Langguth notes that the young girl, imperilled by a bull, echoes the circumstances of Munro's mother's death (219). If the story is taken as Saki's expression of Munro's unconscious exploration of the loss of his mother, is the good girl later murdered in the bachelor's story by the wolf because Munro blames his mother for abandoning him, and does the aunt's control of her story, in which the good girl is saved from the bull, suggest Munro's view of the aunt figure as both patriarchal (associated with a bull) and a mother-substitute?

> “The story began badly,” said the smaller of the small girls, “but it had a beautiful ending.”
>
> “It is the most beautiful story that I ever heard,” said the bigger of the small girls, with immense decision.
>
> “It is the only beautiful story that I have ever heard,” said Cyril. (353)

The aunt, naturally, is appalled and deeply disapproves of such “‘an improper story’” that has “‘undermined the effect of years of careful teaching’” (354), but the children’s preference of “this story to the traditionally contrived one shows an impatience with the kind of soothing Victorian fiction, the Dickensian and Gaskellian tales where goodness is rewarded and evil punished, with which the British aunt has been associated for nearly a century . . . it suggests dissatisfaction with the conventional happy ending that ratifies auntly teachings such as filial obedience, social conformity, and marriage” (Palmer 199). From the proper aunt and medal-winning girl to the two girls in the audience who are the first respondents to both stories, “The Story-Teller” once again aligns women with narrative rather than action, but the story also exploits and upsets the Edwardian social notion that females should be the more decorous and upstanding sex.

A DIFFERENT CLASS

Those few Saki stories which focus on middle-aged women crucially raise issues of social rank, connecting females with the lower class. “The Schartz-Metterklume Method”

(*WG*, October 14, 1911) is one of Saki's mordantly humorous stories of rebellion against rigid, stodgy adulthood, but this time the attack is launched by another adult. Lady Carlotta, taking a brief stroll at a small country station while she waits for her train to resume its journey, notices a horse burdened by a carter's heavy load and tries to intervene. The train leaves without her and Lady Carlotta is suddenly confronted by an "imposingly attired lady" (283) who confuses her for her children's new governess, just arrived. Lady Carlotta pretends she is the "Miss Hope" that Mrs. Quabarl was expecting and drives with the mother of four to her new home (284). After suggesting better automobiles and, at dinner, recommending wines superior to the vintage on offer, "Miss Hope" reassures her employers, who wish their children to be immersed in the stories of historical figures, that she will be teaching history according to the "Schartz-Metterklume method" (285-86). The next day, Mrs. Quabarl finds immobile Irene personifying Rome, while sister Viola, clad in a wolf-skin, is Romulus and Remus, and brothers Claude and Wilfrid have left, in Irene's words, "'to fetch the shabby women'" (286). Mrs. Quabarl rushes to the lawn and finds her two sons dragging off the lodge-keeper's daughters while Lady Carlotta, wielding a cricket bat, looks on impassively. Appalled by her governess's method of teaching history to her children by having them re-enact it, Mrs. Quabarl dismisses her, and the pretend-Miss Hope tells her to hold onto her luggage until she telegraphs them her address. Her luggage, she adds, consists merely of "'a couple of trunks and some golf-clubs and a leopard cub'," and with that, "Lady Carlotta strode out of the Quabarl horizon" (287).

Saki champions the single female over the married mother within this tale of infighting between two bourgeois ladies. Lady Carlotta is a strong-willed, single "New

Woman" ("'You may be very clever and modern, Miss Hope,'" her employer tells her [287]), yet her fierce independence is brought out by Mrs. Quabarl, a typically Saki-esque battleaxe wife who, upon first seeing her missed hope of a governess, cattily sizes her up, "taking a prolonged mental inventory of her clothes and looks" (283), and speaks "in a tone that admitted of very little argument" (284). Mrs. Quabarl's imperious, condescending attitude irritates Lady Carlotta, who vengefully wreaks an elaborate hoax, with the heterosexual matriarch's overprotected children as the secondary victims, in order to undermine a self-satisfied mother who, along with her husband, is easily intimidated by anyone who seems more cultured or lofty than she, for Mrs. Quabarl "was one of those imperfectly self-assured individuals who are magnificent and autocratic as long as they are not seriously opposed. The least show of unexpected resistance goes a long way towards rendering them cowed and apologetic" (284). Indeed, the woman's name suggests a "quarrel" that is interrupted or suddenly barred. Lady Carlotta is no more petty than, and just as witty as, Saki's dandy protagonists Clovis or Reginald when she flippantly concocts and then justifies Canon Teep's assault on his wife with a "'soda-water syphon'" because "'Mrs. Teep is quite the most irritating bridge-player that I have ever sat down with'" (285). This comment, typical of Saki's religion-mocking anti-heroes, also suggests that the man behind Saki may have put some of that self into his devious anti-heroines as well as his male pranksters, for Munro was an avid bridge-player and Munro the child, according to his sister Ethel in her memoir, relished acting out historical battles, tormented governesses, and was once scolded by an aunt for using the word "'debauchery'" after a Roman history lesson (647-50). Women's education was commonly seen in late Victorian and Edwardian England as necessary only "to fit them to become better wives and mothers, better companions for men" (Dyhouse 140) — a column in a 1900 issue of the *Daily Express*, supposedly by an anonymous female writer, includes the sentiment that the "higher education of woman will be to show her how to become a good mother, and how best she may work for the perfection of the race" (McMillan 83) — so Saki's association of education with a single, independent, female trickster who teaches children about rape and war is devilishly subversive.

Saki, who often uses wild beasts or vengeful children to mischievously undermine prosaic adults who wish to stifle creativity and ignore the power of fantasy, not only uses a woman here as the maverick trickster who victimizes children, but indirectly reveals the contradictions of his class views. In the Victorian era, efforts were made to improve the qualifications of governesses, at least in part because the "established middle classes, to advance their own claims to hegemony, were merely demanding greater sophistication from them" (Burstyn 23). Lady Carlotta, as Miss Hope (who avenges Mrs. Quabarl's mis-identification of her class by having Mrs. Quabarl's youngsters drag off the groundskeeper's lower-class children), is a problem for Mrs. Quabarl because she does not know her "place," undermines the education-employing status and the complacent certainty of the bourgeois family, and so predicts the class confusion and disintegration that would envelop England after the war: "When the new governess failed to express wondering admiration of the large newly purchased and expensive car, and lightly alluded to the superior advantages of one or two makes which had just been put on the market, the discomfiture of her patroness was almost abject" (284-85). Yet in Saki's canon, the lower classes are rarely represented in a complex way, and here they are dismissed as the brief butts of Lady Carlotta's elaborate pedagogical prank. Lady

Carlotta, resentful at her employer's condescending treatment of her supposed governess, has her young charges abduct the lodge-keeper's children, pretending they are the soon-to-be-raped Sabine women. As disturbing as Lady Carlotta's "Schartz-Metterklume method" (the name may be a shot at the militancy of pre-World War I Germany[89]) is, however, Saki's argument seems to be that history was often a series of messy, bloody events, from war and conquest to repression and rape. The use of supposedly innocent women and children to illustrate such a lesson only makes Saki's point more disturbingly powerful.

A recurring character in Saki's fiction is Mrs. Packletide, who appears in two Clovis stories, as a polite guest at a house party in "A Matter of Sentiment" and as a friend to Clovis in times of financial woes, and a common enemy of Loona Bimberton, in "The Recessional." In "Mrs. Packletide's Tiger," however, the dowager is centre-stage in a story that pretends to make a hero out of the elder woman, but in fact shoots her down as an auntly figure who tries "to be male," as Langguth notes (176), foolishly adopting patriarchal power through that most manly of pursuits, hunting. Mrs. Packletide, motivated by her catty rivalry with Loona Bimberton, who has recently boasted of flying with an Algerian aviator, determines that an even more exotic adventure would involve shooting a tiger in India. Along with a paid helpmate, Miss Mebbin, Mrs. Packletide travels to India and waits for the approach of a particularly aged and infirm tiger that is roaming the area. Unfortunately, the hunter shoots the goat being used as bait and the tiger expires from heart failure at the sound of the gun. The penny-pinching Miss Mebbin eventually blackmails Mrs. Packletide, who is afraid she will tell Loona Bimberton the truth. The story shows the much-revered hunt of Victorian times to be foolish, and motivated here by one-up(wo)manship. Saki exposes the competitiveness between women, made worse by social status (the petty consumer rivalries between members of the upper-middle class, who had much discretionary income in an increasingly commercial and advertisement-driven society), so it is a delicious twist that a lower-class woman succeeds in extorting Mrs. Packletide and upsetting her plans.

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[89] The name may also have been inspired, at least in part, by a German women's movement that Havelock Ellis noted in his writings:

> The object of the agitation was the 'demands of the mother' . . . The title of this new movement was 'Mutterschutz' and it was connected integrally to the movement for sexual reform in Germany and supported by recent developments in German science particularly in the field of sexual pathology, according to Ellis. 'Mutterschutz' was originally the title of a 'Journal for the reform of sexual morals' established in 1905 . . . The journal was originally the organ of an association for the protection of mothers, more especially unmarried mothers, entitled the 'Bund für Mutterschutz'. (Jeffreys 136).

The journal *Mutterschutz* (*Mutterschutz – Zeitschrift zur Reform der sexuellen Ethik* ran from 1905 until 1907, when its name was changed to *Die neue Generation*), to which Ellis contributed, is mentioned in Ellis's 1910 work *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* (Vol. VI, p. 609); Munro seems to have been well-versed in German, as he claims in his August 4 letter to the *Morning Post* (see Appendix Four); many of the books consulted and quoted in *The Rise of the Russian Empire* are German scholarly texts. See also Regine Heidenreich, "Manifestations of the Body in Early German Social Policy: Bund fuer Mutterschutz (Federation for the Protection of Mothers)," *Proceedings of the 2nd Annual Qualitative Methods Conference*, <www.criticalmethods.org/bodtwo.htm>. Accessed October 5, 2005.

Class is important, too, in "Morlvera," where the title character is, in fact, a doll in a shop window, a doll, Saki tells us, that "might be said to have something more than the average fashion-plate female possesses; in place of a vacant, expressionless stare she has character in her face" (491), though it is bad character. The only lower-class, dialect-speaking characters in Saki's stories, ten-year-old Emmeline and seven-year-old Bert, assess her in the toy shop window. Saki's attitude has the whiff of well-meaning condescension:

> There is probably a latent enmity between the necessarily under-clad and the unnecessarily over-dressed, but a little kindness and good-fellowship on the part of the latter will often change the sentiment to admiring devotion; if the lady [the doll, to be named Morlvera by the children] in peach-coloured velvet and leopard skin had worn a pleasant expression in addition to her other elaborate furnishings, Emmeline at least might have respected and even loved her. As it was, she gave

> her a horrible reputation, based chiefly on a second-hand knowledge of gilded depravity derived from the conversation of those who were skilled in the art of novelette reading; Bert filled in a few damaging details from his own limited imagination. (492)

As Emmeline and Bert look on, a wealthy woman and her naughty, wily son Victor pull up in a carriage (an oddly Victorian means of transport circa 1911). They enter the shop and buy the doll for Bertha's cousin, whom Victor detests; Victor throws out the doll to be run over as the carriage backs up, and the two children cheer the mean Morlvera's destruction. Afterwards, Bert decides that Victor was the son Morlvera abandoned, who returned to get his revenge. Saki's portrait of the crueller, smarter Victor contrasts sharply with the romanticizing but naïve lower-class children, who seem too simple. And why is a doll, the female Morlvera, so immediately disliked, suggesting a reflex misogyny?

Saki's connection of women with the lower classes — from Mrs. Packletide and Lady Carlotta to Jocantha in "The Philanthropist and the Happy Cat" and Morlvera — suggests that he sees women as, fundamentally, a different class of person. In this outlook, yet again, he was resolutely of his time, for in the late-Victorian and Edwardian patriarchy, "men, irrespective of their economic roles, [were] accorded higher status than women . . . any task that women perform[ed] drop[ped] in rank in the hierarchy of desirable tasks because it bec[ame] tainted with women's low status" (Burstyn 168). Although, in the years leading up to World War I, there were more professional-working, highly educated women, in Saki's fiction, even non-working, middle- or upper-class women remain tainted by and associated with the lower orders, suggesting that the entire gender is inherently of a lesser rank. Saki marks many women in his stories as somehow second-class, lower than men and generally not as active, clever, sexual, or socially important as men. Women in Saki's fiction are not just, first and foremost, un-manly and thus unequal to man, but lesser creatures. Saki repeatedly shows aunts as beastly, but he also marks other women in his stories and sketches as closer to animal, seeing them as another species entirely from men.

THE BEASTLINESS OF SAKI'S WOMEN

Women, long regarded by most men in Western culture as an inferior sex by the time the twentieth century arrived, are not only usually associated with a lower class of person, but often seen as a separate species in Saki's fiction, their humanity stripped from them as they are compared to felines. In Munro's letters to his sister from Burma, he writes of the many animals he is fascinated by, even making reference to Darwin, whose works he seemed to be well acquainted with ("Biography" 660-62), and he tells Ethel of adventures with his pet tiger-cub (664-68). Yet Saki's primary association of felines with females may have stemmed from Munro's experience of his sister's own "attachment to cats," which "would later suggest a thorough identification with them" (Langguth 35). Ethel dedicated an encyclopedia to cats and, by "the end of her long life, Ethel Munro had worn out any number of cats, and on her deathbed she demanded that her final cat, a big male named Tommy, be killed so that he would be waiting to meet her on the Other Side" (171). Ethel, according to her biography, was a childhood accomplice in her younger brother's pranks and games and, according to Langguth, was a lifelong, increasingly eccentric spinster whom Munro was careful to keep at arm's length (she lived in a Surrey cottage which Munro left to her in his will).[90] The inclusion of Ethel as a girl in Munro's pranks and schemes but the later distance between sister and brother in their adult years may have been refracted through the prism of fiction into Saki's world of strong-willed, triumphant girls and domineering women or spinsters who are out-of-touch with men and the real world. On occasion, as in "Forewarned" or "Quail Seed," women are gently mocked as delusional over-romancers who get far too carried away by Gothic novels and romance books to realize the actual mundaneness of a situation; these may be gentle digs at Ethel, who perversely romanticized Bloody Sunday when she saw the massacre in St. Petersburg while visiting her brother and later fantasized about the two of them living in Siberia together, even though they had long lived in separate places in different counties.

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[90] Langguth suggests that Munro tolerated Ethel as he did Aunt Tom (131) and that Ethel became an "Aunt in the Munro tradition" (165). According to Lambert, cousin Cecil William Mercer countered Ethel Munro's comment on the possibility of a marriage between her brother and a Lady Rosalind Northcote by

In her writings about Saki, from her biography to her responses to Graham Greene, Ethel's fierce defence of her brother and self-subordination to his memory as a great writer and soldier suggests that, while she was headstrong and resolute, she never thought of herself as a social equal to her brother or men in general. Ethel's "girlhood experience," then, like others of her generation, "exemplifies the remarkable tenacity of the hold that the Victorian definition of the feminine role could have on the development of a female personality in childhood, adolescence and adulthood" (Gorham 205); Ethel, as Munro's and Saki's most intimate experience of womanhood, likely offered them an example of females as headstrong and romanticizing but, ultimately, willingly subordinate.[91] Such a model of femininity "reinforced the Victorian conception of

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suggesting that "he may have put the idea of marriage from him because after their father's death he assumed full responsibility for his difficult, not to say impossible, sister" (36).

[91] In her memoir of her brother, Ethel includes a "pencilled fragment on 'the Garden of Eden'" (691), which relates Eve's stubborn refusal to eat the forbidden fruit, despite the Serpent's and even an Archangel's encouragements. Ethel notes that "Hector had a special detestation for this type of character, stubborn, placid, unimaginative, like the awful, good child in 'The Story Teller' who is from life, though we never knew her as a child" (693). Yet Eve's stubbornness, at least, may have been inspired by Ethel.

masculinity, and helped to maintain the system of dividing the moral, intellectual and emotional universe into separate spheres" (209).

In "Reginald on Besetting Sins" (*WG*, April 22, 1903), Saki uses a woman as an example of why one must often deceive in polite society; in "The Hedgehog" (*MP*, August 19, 1913), women casually lob barbs at each other during a game of tennis. In "Excepting Mrs. Pentherby," Reggie Bruttle hires Mrs. Pentherby, who usually placates her squabbling family, to control all the quarrels at a six-month long country-house party by generally ensuring that she is the focus of disapprobation. Within five days, she is "cordially disliked by the members of her own sex . . . wherever she came in contact with her own sex the light of battle kindled at once" (467). This catty woman-for-hire

> exposed little weaknesses, she prodded sore places, she snubbed enthusiasms, she was generally right in a matter of argument, or, if wrong, she somehow contrived to make her adversary appear foolish and opinionated. She did, and said, horrible things in a matter-of-fact innocent way, and she did, and said, matter-of-fact innocent things in a horrible way. In short, the unanimous feminine verdict on her was that she was objectionable. (467-68)

When Reggie's sister-in-law discovers his ploy, she is most angry because her own pugnacious nature was arrested by a fellow-fighter: "more than anybody, more than ever she disliked Mrs. Pentherby. It was impossible to tell how many quarrels that woman had done her out of" (470). In Saki's world, while it is Reggie who sets the queen cat among the cats here, the women will still turn their teeth and claws on each other, rather than on the man who is truly to blame.

In "The Philanthropist and the Happy Cat," as noted, Jocantha is contrasted with Attab, while Saki often shows how catty women are with each other in stories that involve cats or imply cattiness in their titles ("Fur," "Mrs. Packletide's Tiger," "The Way to the Dairy"). In "Tobermory" (*WG*, November 27, 1909), a male cat acts in a more feminine, gossipy way when, after learning to speak, he reveals at a party the guests' secret opinions of each other that he has overheard. In the pitch-black comedy "The Penance," collected in the posthumous collection *The Toys of Peace*, Octavian Ruttle kills the neighbours' cat, with its owners' assent, who had been killing his chickens; the owners' children, however, find out, and the two boys and one girl hold Octavian's two-year-old daughter for ransom. In "The Sex That Doesn't Shop" (*WG*, March 27, 1909), the "I" narrator (Saki? Reginald?) bemoans women's lack of practicality in shopping, comparing the foreign "feminine mind" in shopping to a bee "flower-visiting" and a "sheep-worrying dog" that seldom deals with the flocks of stores in her immediate vicinity (54). But then, when the "I" broaches the topic of women being ignorant of where to purchase "a book [you have produced] which has met with some little measure of success" (55), suggesting the voice is that of Munro/Saki (concerning *The Rise of the Russian Empire*, *The Westminster Alice*, or *Reginald*), the author-narrator drives home his point that women are, indeed, an ignorant and silly breed apart from men, utterly oblivious of where to get books or pick up a copy of a particular newspaper (55), even obtuse as to the purpose of blotting-paper (56). It is hardly surprising, then, that

> The brutal directness of the masculine shopper arouses a certain combative derision in the feminine onlooker. A cat that spreads one shrew-mouse over the greater part of a long summer afternoon, and then possibly loses him, doubtless feels the same contempt for the terrier who compresses his rat into ten seconds of the strenuous life. (55-56)

Saki, capping off an essay about shopping differences between the genders that seems, to the modern reader, a stale precursor to endless stand-up comic routines on the same subject, ends with this familiar animal analogy, where men are the dogs, while women are the cats.

Yet an essay included in the posthumous collection *The Square Egg and Other Sketches*, "The Achievement of the Cat," shows that Munro/Saki had considerable respect for the cat as an animal, contradicting his disparaging analogies between females and felines in his fiction. The essay, as with most of the collection (there are, for instance, two sketches of the front written from a soldier's point of view and an essay on Pskoff written when Munro was a correspondent in Russia), is probably written by Munro, not Saki, and perhaps even before Saki came into being. The essay offers a Munro/Saki who seems to be both the social historian of 1899 and a writer of fictional stories involving felines (most famously "Tobermory") who now, in a curiously Darwinian state of mind, reflects on how the "natural history of the social developments of species affords . . . [an] instance [of] the coming-together of two once warring elements . . . represented by the civilized man and the domestic cat" (555). He comments that humans seem to have conquered cats because of our advantage of opposable thumbs, but that, through a "master-stroke of adaptation . . . [cats] 'captured' a place in the very keystone of the conqueror's organization" (555). The cat is not a work-animal, Munro/Saki remarks, and not, like the dog that is sometimes equated with men in Saki's fiction (see "Dogged," for instance, in Appendix One), "a humble camp-follower" (555). Munro/Saki (and here Saki's preoccupation with wildness vs. tameness shines through) admires the cat's independence, its docility only up to a point, its refusal, unlike dogs, "to be kennelled or harnessed" (555), and even its clever way of being diplomatic with its human masters when need be. Munro/Saki also pays homage to the cat's apparent luxuriousness, its "deliberate aloofness," "innate savage spirit," and its "torture-instinct (common alone to human and feline)" (555). Ultimately, however, Munro/Saki most admires the cat because of its abiding "courage and self-respect," with a kitten, unlike a child or puppy, he says, willing to oppose danger with "frantic resistance" (556), a compliment all the more ironic when one considers the feline-like suffragettes Munro-Saki savages. Even stripped of civilization's comforts, Munro/Saki concludes, the cat remains dignified, proud, and wild, and "dies fighting to the last, quivering with the choking rage of mastered resistance, and voicing in its death-yell that agony of bitter remonstrance which human animals, too, have flung at the powers that may be; the last protest against a destiny that might have made them happy–and has not" (556). The cat is never, then, unlike Edwardian women who were mastered by men, forced to be on the defensive (often in unhappy marriages, as Saki acknowledges in "The Pond"). In Saki's fiction, however, it is usually the woman who masters the man but is bested by nature. Saki rarely sees the woman as a creature who has to defend herself against or resist oppressively patriarchal cultural and social forces. Women in Saki's world are usually creatures of comfort, civilization, and tameness — placid, materialist, complacent beings who often want to domesticate men — and thus not the proud, dignified, wild creatures that Saki sometimes compared them to in his fiction. The fascinating exceptions remain: that tigress Mrs. Packletide, the trickster Lady Carlotta in "The Schartz-Metterklume Method," that wily heroine Vera, the scheming Beryl in "A Sacrifice to Necessity," and the overly imaginative but brooding, sympathetic Mona in "The Pond." Yet when women flouted their popular image as the decorous, weaker sex, actively rallied against the status quo of tame Edwardian society, and fought for independence and change, in the most important political movement of the era, Saki showed these struggling, resistant, proud creatures no sympathy, instead savaging them brutally in his satire.

MUNRO-SAKI'S ANTI-SUFFRAGETTE BACKLASH

Feminism, a word which entered into general discourse in Britain in the 1890s, and suffragettism would seem to be movements with which the unconventional, non-heteronormative Saki would have some sympathy. Some feminists of the time even talked of new forms of marriage or opposed marriage (in practice, not in the abstract, as Saki seems to do; see Kent 81-113); the suffragette cause involved pranks, hoaxes, and political resistance on the part of a section of society that was being oppressed, at least in part, for its sexuality, and suffragettes were often labelled homosexual.[92] If, as many felt, "suffragist attitudes to the family were subversive" (Harrison 195), so too were Saki's. His Veras and Lady Carlottas are, it seems, mobile, clever, troublemaking girls and women who would make excellent agitators for the vote. In gaining the vote, such women would no longer be outsiders, however, but part of the establishment and, at a time of "significant gender anxiety" (Mitchell 137), a "backlash arose when the accumulating evidence of real equality threatened centuries of comfortable male dominance" (138). Given Munro-Saki's increasing masculine anxiety as war approached, it is unsurprising that, as Carey notes, the "sympathy which, as a member of the persecuted minority, Saki might have been expected to extend to other victims of social injustice does not materialize" (xiv).

From the beginnings of the more activist, demonstrative suffragette[93] movement in the Edwardian era with the WSPU's (Women's Social and Political Union) adoption of militant tactics in the autumn of 1905, Saki vehemently opposes and ridicules the cause in his satire, to the point of unabashed misogyny. There is no suggestion in Saki's fiction that he opposes feminism in general and there is only one story in which he opposes suffrage; his enemy is suffragettism, and the author-narrator who shows rebellious single girls and women cannot endure masses of real women pulling pranks and tweaking the nose of the male establishment (tactics ranged from heckling, obstruction, and confrontation to hunger strikes, vandalism, and arson). Why such a reaction? While Saki supports single women (and, rarely, childless wives) as outsider-figures, he still regards women as second-class and aunts as patriarchal oppressors and supporters of heteronormative society. His anti-suffragette stance arises from his scorn for any forceful attempt by women to demand equality with men or concessions from the true patriarchy (unlike many Edwardian opponents, he never attacks suffragettes' sexuality, as he is uninterested, except in "The Philanthropist and the Happy Cat," in women's desire or even women as mothers). Ultimately, however, Saki's anti-suffragette stance arises from a blurring of Munro and Saki. An emasculation-fearing Munro who would mask his masculine anxieties with a martial patriotism as war approached co-opts Saki in his suffragette satires, for Munro-Saki cannot abide the notion of militant women who saw the British government as the enemy. The suffragette struggle was often framed as part of a "sex war" and while many feminists criticized the patriarchal notion that masculinity was innate and natural, not a cultural construct, such an idea would have seemed ridiculous to most Edwardians. The WSPU's acts of civil disobedience showed that women could "be destroyers, not nurturers; they were physically violent, rather than pacific and passive; they acted collectively and publicly, rather than individually and domestically" (Miller 155); suffragettes' actions thus exposed "the ultimate taboo for women in British society . . . not the expression of sexuality, but the expression of anger and power" (155). Men, not women, fought wars, and the suffragettes' adoption of increasingly militant tactics only made them seem more masculine than the patriotic Englishman Munro was raised to be. In demanding an equal place alongside men, in Munro-Saki's eyes, they were reducing men in stature and threatening Munro's already fragile sense of his place in the British imperial-masculine culture.

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[92] See, for instance, Kent 53; for more on sexuality and the suffrage cause, see Kent.

[93] Suffragettes were distinct from suffragists, the non-militant supporters of women's suffrage who continued to attempt reform through political channels and were mainly represented by the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS), which only distanced itself from the WSPU in 1912.

While Munro, as a child, was raised by women, he would have understood, as an Edwardian gentleman educated as an adolescent in boys' public schools and by his imperial policeman father, that imperial duties and going to war meant protecting the motherland and women, who were seen as "both weaker and purer than men" (Burstyn 31). Public (private in the North American sense) schools "enforced a crude pecking order of privilege by seniority and muscular might" and anti-suffrage men argued that, "since government rested on the use or threat of force, it could not concern the weaker sex" (Tosh, "The Making of Masculinities" 48) and "persons who could not defend the law had no right to share in its making" (Mitchell 126). Manliness was "the civic virtue par excellence" and by the Edwardian age, "the neo-Spartan, stoical qualities fostered in the public schools were celebrated, and increasingly significant, too, was the code of imperial manliness" (John and Eustance 4). While Saki is rarely chivalrous to women in his fiction, Munro and men like him "were prepared to be chivalrous to women" (31) in a world of happily separate spheres — introduced to many English males by sex-segregated public schools — but this "code of chivalry was . . . strained" by suffragettism in the Edwardian era (Thompson 254). A professed reverence for women was merely, in many cases, the public face of private condescension for the lesser sex (see Kent 165-67). In fact, while "opponents of suffrage saw themselves as worthy defenders of a faith, celebrating and demonstrating a tough masculinity that would concede neither authority nor power," the "language of the pro-suffrage man also drew on similar themes though with differing inferences" (John and Eustance 3; see also Holton 112-14 and Mitchell 131-32 for the adoption of imperial language in girls' fiction), linking suffrage to an improved empire and assuring the public that men's support for the cause was truly chivalrous.

In a society where women's bodies were still carefully regulated and their social mobility remained limited, the male establishment was unprepared for women who would try to force political change on the streets with unladylike, civil disobedience and physically-expressed opposition to male privilege. Even "those Liberals who were not opposed to the suffrage for other reasons were reluctant to be seen to be giving way before the militant challenge" (Powell 84) and the government resorted to "'illiberal' acts" (93) in the face of such agitation, with the police force-feeding (a violation "likened to rape" by those who endured it [Bruley 32]; see also Kent 198-99) suffragette hunger strikers and sometimes beating up or sexually assaulting protestors. "Male opposition was formalised in 1909 in a Men's League for Opposing Women's Suffrage under the presidency of Lord Curzon" (Crow 202), while many women opposed suffragettes and suffragists, too (including the writers Marie Corelli and Julia Frankau).[94] A male

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[94] Munro-Saki's anti-suffragettism and Saki's intermittent or quasi-misogyny pale in comparison with the viciously anti-female attitudes of author William Wymark Jacobs (1863-1943), best known for his story "The Monkey's Paw," whose feelings likely arose from hating his stepmother and could only have been exacerbated when he somehow married a woman whose political views ran utterly contrary to his own:

> Few writers in the whole of English literature have taken such a consistently low view of women. His older women are nagging shrews not above a bit of physical violence when their

supporter of suffrage could not maintain his "public support . . . without reflecting on what really constituted his manhood" (Tosh, "The Making of Masculinities" 39).[95] Newspaper accounts of suffragette actions were often merely veiled attacks on the female activists. The *Daily Express*, for instance, a paper which published four verse satires by Saki in 1913, called suffragettes "'fooligans'" and "malignants" (McMillan 91) and generally painted them as hysterical, fierce, subhuman creatures when, in fact, they often outsmarted the police with various ploys, subterfuges, "surprises and clever disguises" (Kent 197). An account of October 25, 1906 notes that an "army of raucous fooligans made a feline raid on the peace of both Houses of Parliament and were repulsed by the police with heavy loss of dignity, drapery, and millinery" (91); the suffragettes are described as "stupid" and having "screeched," a "tigerish" woman is a "shrieking, spluttering, shaking bundle of costume and vibration . . . screeching with cat-like shrills" (92). Saki, too, not only ridicules the suffragette cause, but consistently attempts to

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> husbands misbehave themselves. His younger women are artful liars who once they have, like carnivorous plants, got their prey in their clutches proceed to grow like their mothers. One of his last stories . . . deals with wife murder.
>
> In this we can probably trace his lasting hatred of his stepmother. His marriage, too, was far from easy . . .
>
> . . .
>
> . . . His wife was a passionate suffragette, who was imprisoned for breaking windows with a hammer which she carried hidden in her muff. She was a Socialist, while he was intensely Conservative. Their life was a series of furious quarrels about their children, about holidays, about education, about politics, about everything. (Hugh Greene 6-7)

[95] Saki's satirical jibes at and Munro's possible distaste for Shaw (and/or his plays) — see the preface of Appendix Two — may have arisen from envy, but also from dislike of Shavian plays' politics. Shaw was a socialist and supporter of suffrage; a number of his plays (e.g., *You Never Can Tell*, *Major Barbara*) offer formidable female characters and support changes to divorce and prostitution laws that were unfair to women.

Manager Frederick Harrison (d. 1926) and actor-manager Cyril Maude (1862–1951) agreed to premiere *You Never Can Tell* at the Haymarket Theatre in London in 1897, but rehearsals were tense, with Shaw and the actors at odds with each other; the comedy was eventually put on in 1900, and in 1903, Shaw wrote, pretending to be Maude, a mock-account of the debacle for Maude's memoir of the Haymarket (see Holroyd 389-92). A decade later, Munro approached Harrison, still manager of the Haymarket, with his draft of *The Watched Pot*, and Harrison suggested that Cyril Maude's brother Charles work with Saki in refining the play for the stage, which meant, to Munro/Saki's displeasure, trimming many witticisms (*The Penguin Complete Saki* 865-66). It is not known if Munro/Saki ever met Cyril Maude; *The Watched Pot* was never produced in Munro's lifetime.

marginalize suffragette figures by exoticizing, bestializing, or otherwise dehumanizing them, telling the reader that they are not proper English citizens, let alone respectable women.

Munro-Saki's animosity towards suffragettism not only confirms his basic belief in women's inferiority, but also Edwardian feminists' "suspicions that this was exactly how men felt about them" (Kent 172). The male establishment feared "disorder and even anarchy in a world of widening imperial responsibility" (Harrison 33). In the first decade of the twentieth century, anti-suffragists "concentrated much more upon the notion that a female-dominated electorate would subvert military security" (Harris 27) and the prominently anti-suffrage Lord Cromer, for instance, suggested that Britain's military readiness, especially in the face of a strong German empire, was hindered by the nation's internal battle between the sexes (Harrison 34). Victorian and Edwardian Britain greatly valued men's physical strength, courage, and valour, and still required the "male to arm himself in defence of discipline and civilisation" (74), so there was "a partial correlation between anti-suffragist and imperial feeling" (75) for many "Antis," who felt that suffrage would mean a pacifist-minded, effeminate dilution of male imperial power and held a "narrow concept of war-making which disfranchised women because they allegedly could not fight" (77).

Munro's anti-suffragettism would have been consolidated in his club environment, with the bachelor and Cocoa Tree Club regular immersed, during his years in London, in "a set of institutions whose [post-Edwardian] importance within the elite but palely reflects their former glory" (97) and whose members were often opponents of suffrage who saw the franchise as an exclusively male club: "there was a fierceness about the clubman's resentment at women's attempts to approach the preserve which suggests the existence of what might be described as an intermittent or localized misogyny, and which expected the separation of male and female spheres to be geographical as well as social" (98). In an "age of bachelors, or of married men who spent a large part of their lives as though they were bachelors: the London clubs – recruited from a number of ancillary male institutions in the public schools . . . – catered amply for their needs" (97) and male anti-suffragists often exhibited a haughty exclusivity that veiled an anxious territorialism.

Munro-Saki's dislike of suffragettes probably arises from some or all of these imperial-masculine concerns regarding the preservation of the status quo, all of which are borne of fear although, in Munro-Saki's case, there is also a sense of envy. Suffragettes are not disliked in Munro-Saki's fiction primarily because they are women who refuse to stay in their place, or even because they demand "votes for women on the same terms as it was or should be granted to men" (Kent 207), but because they demand the vote *in* the same terms as men would fight for an ideal — in an active, organized, demonstratively militant force. These are united, martial women who are fighting for what they believe in, which is inclusion in the military, imperial, masculine culture. Such staunch, organized opposition to English masculinity only shows up its failures, as suggested in the government's and police's often hysterical, unnecessarily violent quelling of suffragettism.[96] Suffragettes often seemed, as Munro and others surely noticed, to show more solidarity than Englishmen, whom Munro-Saki and Munro attack as weak-kneed and apathetic in *When William Came* and "An Old Love."

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[96] The periodical *The Suffragette* often pointed out that the government did not "act against [male] Ulster Unionists with the same savagery with which it moved against suffrage militants" (Holton 116).

"A Young Turkish Catastrophe" (possibly first published in *WG*, c. 1909) is, in fact, a satire of suffrage in an age of the New Woman, but it establishes many of the satirist's strategies for attacking suffragettism. Saki sets the story in the exotic Orient, in order to align suffagettism with the foreign and incomprehensible, and to viciously mock women through the more acceptably misogynist characters of Eastern Others. The Minister for Fine Arts in an unnamed land talks to the Grand Vizier about votes for women:

> "To have votes? Women?" exclaimed the Vizier in some astonishment. "My dear Pasha, the New Departure has a flavour of the absurd as it is; don't let's try and make it altogether ridiculous. Women have no souls and no intelligence; why on earth should they have votes?"
>
> "I know it sounds absurd," said the Minister, "but they are seriously considering the idea in the West."
>
> "Then they must have a larger equipment of seriousness than I gave them credit for. After a lifetime of specialized effort in maintaining my gravity I can scarcely restrain an inclination to smile at the suggestion. Why, our womenfolk in most cases don't know how to read or write. How could they perform the operation of voting?"
>
> "They could be shown the names of the candidates and where to make their cross."
>
> "I beg your pardon?" interrupted the Vizier.
>
> "Their crescent, I mean," corrected the Minister. "It would be to the liking of the Young Turkish Party," he added.
>
> "Oh, well," said the Vizier, "if we are to do the thing at all we may as well go the whole h–" he pulled up just as he was uttering the name of an unclean animal, and continued, "the complete camel. I will issue instructions that womenfolk are to have votes." (60)

The Vizier's references to hogs and camels are fitting, for women here are more beasts than fellow "folk." Saki uses the Vizier to express contemptible notions of women as basically dumb creatures — soulless, senseless, and illiterate — which a more genteel, upstanding Englishman (such as Munro himself) would never openly express. The West's contemplation of suffrage is shown to be ridiculous by the inferior, usually effeminate East. When the singly-married leader of the upstart Young Turkish Party fails in his election race because his opponent's harem of six hundred wives vote for their husband, Saki dismisses Western marriage along with the insane new Western interest in votes for women. Females are reduced to husband's possessions who ironically undermine women's suffrage. In Saki's view, votes-for-women is an incomprehensible, alien concept because women are not fully human, but a lesser species. Unlike the fierce, roving Gabriel-Ernest, whose tale was written around the same time, women are lesser, toothless creatures who cannot even threaten, let alone disrupt, the established social order.

In "Hermann The Irascible" (*WG*, some time before August 1911), Saki sets the suffrage question in England and focusses on the suffragettes,[97] but the satire takes place in a near-future, an absurd universe which, like the exotic setting of "A Young Turkish Catastrophe," only emphasizes that suffrage-supporters are unreasonable, out of touch with reality, and have ridiculous aspirations. Once again, too, Saki diametrically opposes suffrage and (male) royal rule, suggesting that he sees suffrage as a threat to the regal, patriarchal British nation-state. In the 1910s, Hermann the Irascible is King, and the Prime Minister informs him that "'we are hampered by these votes-for-women creatures'" (125). Hermann's response to these sub-male pests is to grant them super-male privileges; while men still have the optional vote, women are granted the compulsory vote in all elections, however trivial:

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[97] Two other Saki stories touch briefly on suffragettes, using them as easy scapegoats for middle-class women's stratagems to maintain peace and respectability. In "The Brogue," Clovis suggests that Mrs. Mullet gets rid of her family's troublesome horse by sending it to pasture miles away and framing militant women for the theft:

> "Write 'Votes for Women' on the stable door, and the thing would pass for a Suffragette outrage. . . ."
>
> "Every newspaper in the country would ring with the affair," said Mrs. Mullet; "can't you imagine the headline, 'Valuable Hunter Stolen By Suffragettes'? The police would scour the countryside until they found the animal." (252)

Clovis' flippant scapegoating of suffragettes suggests his political disinterest, but Saki's suggestion, through an older, married woman, is that the suffragettes take up too much newspaper and public attention. In "The Occasional Garden," Elinor Rapsley resentfully anticipates coming lunch guest Gwenda Pottingdon's catty comments about her lack of a garden, so the Baroness advises her to call in the "'Occasional-Oasis Supply Association'" (506), an organization that installs a temporary garden for any occasion. The plot is a success, but a few days later, Gwenda drops in and notices that the garden is gone. "'Suffragettes,' said Elinor promptly; 'didn't you hear about it? They broke in and made hay of the whole thing in about ten minutes'" (508). Thus suffragettes, those notorious wreakers of minor disruptions who are making "political hay" out of very little, are conveniently blamed by a middle-class woman in order to cover up her catty hoax. Saki champions a world of bourgeois women concerned with appearances — usually the target of his scorn in other stories — over glory-hound suffragettes, those agitating women who, in Saki's world, are truly making much ado about nothing.

> The bulk of the women of the country had been indifferent or hostile to the franchise agitation, and the most fanatical Suffragettes began to wonder what they had found so attractive in the prospect of putting ballot-papers into a box. . . .
>
> It was not wonderful that the female disfranchisement agitation became a formidable movement. The No-Votes-for-Women League numbered its feminine adherents by the million; its colours, citron and old Dutch-madder, were flaunted everywhere, and its battle hymn, "We Don't Want to Vote," became a popular refrain. As the Government showed no signs of being impressed by peaceful persuasion, more violent methods came into vogue. Meetings were disturbed, Ministers were mobbed, policemen were bitten, and ordinary prison fare rejected, and on the eve of the anniversary of Trafalgar women bound themselves in tiers up the entire length of the Nelson column so that its customary floral decoration had to be abandoned. Still the Government obstinately adhered to its conviction that women ought to have the vote. (125-26)

Women then organize a "Great Weep," crying all over the country until Hermann deprives women of the right to vote; thus women demonstrate, in mass, one of their supposed markers of inferiority — their emotionality — in order to strip themselves of democratic equality with men. The spectacle of suffragettes, demanding the enforced failure to vote, bound to a monument commemorating Nelson's victory instead of the usual flowers there, dwarfs women beneath a phallic military monument and reduces them to decorative natural objects. While women are metaphorized as placid hogs and camels by the Vizier, the chuckling Hermann, in his final lines, relates them to Saki's usual feminized animal: "'There are more ways of killing a cat than by choking it with cream,' he quoted, 'but I'm not sure,' he added, "that it's not the best way'" (127). Not only do these agitating felines not know what is good for them, then, but they are taught a lesson by being granted too much of a good thing. Hermann's solution is a hypocritical, illogical non-solution, for the patriarch overcompensates for an injustice while men can still enjoy optional voting rights, but in a man's story about men punishing women, females never really have any say; even cynicism about politics is a male-only right. As in "A Young Turkish Catastrophe," an oppressive sense of irascible male authority blankets the story.

"The Gala Programme: An Unrecorded Episode in Roman History" (collected in *The Square Egg*) transports the agitation for women's suffrage to Ancient Rome, a romanticized place to which so many British imperialists drew connections. Emperor Placidus Superbus attends his birthday celebration at the Imperial Circus, where a chariot race and animal-fights are planned. A difficulty has arisen, however:

> "The Suffragetæ," explained the official; "they threaten to interfere with the chariot race. . . .
> . . . it is rumoured that at the signal for the entry of the chariots five hundred women will let themselves down with ropes from the public seats and swarm all over the course. Naturally no race could be run under such circumstances; the programme will be ruined."
>
> "On my birthday," said Placidus Superbus, "they would not dare to do such an outrageous thing."
>
> "The more august the occasion, the more desirous they will be to advertise themselves and their cause," said the harassed official; "they do not scruple to make riotous interference even with the ceremonies in the temples."
>
> "Who *are* these Suffragetæ?" asked the Emperor. "Since I came back from my Pannonian expedition I have heard of nothing else but their excesses and demonstrations."
>
> "They are a political sect of very recent origin, and their aim seems to be to get a big share of political authority into their hands. The means they are taking to convince us of their fitness to help in making and administering the laws consist of wild indulgence in tumult, destruction, and defiance of all authority. They have already damaged some of the most historically valuable of our public treasures, which can never be replaced."
>
> "Is it possible that the sex which we hold in such honour and for which we feel such admiration can produce such hordes of Furies?" asked the Emperor.

> "It takes all sorts to make a sex," observed the Master of the Ceremonies, who possessed a certain amount of worldly wisdom; "also," he continued anxiously, "it takes very little to upset a gala programme." (549-50)

The serene, supreme ruler's response is ruthlessly simple. After the "frenzied troops" of women have invaded the arena with a "wild tumult of shouting, laughing, angry protests, and shrill screams of defiance" (550), this "invading horde" uttering "howls of triumph" and swarming around (550-51), Emperor Placidus Superbus announces that the second half of the programme shall proceed first, so the savage beasts are released: "The wild bulls were really wild, and the hyæna reputed to be mad thoroughly lived up to its reputation" (551).

The suffragettes' idea of stopping a chariot race suggests that Saki may have written the story after Emily Wilding Davison ran onto the track and was killed at the 1913 King's Derby, as Carey suggests (xiv). Whereas animals or fiercely rebellious humans usually disrupt the status quo in Saki's stories, here the unthinking, inferior wild beasts of Suffragettes — consistently represented as a brutish, swarming horde — are conquered by superior, truly wild animals in order to preserve the imperial patriarchy. In most Saki stories, a complacent, powerful man such as the emperor would be defeated by Clovis or Vera, but here Placidus Superbus murderously maintains his superiority. As in "A Young Turkish Catastrophe" and "Hermann the Irascible," the male rulers are unaware of the suffragettes' campaign; thus Saki suggests that the suffragettes' empty cause has gone unnoticed and their attempts at change are hopeless. Saki urges the reader to side with the ruler's indignation that his birthday not be ruined and shows that the patriarch's, and by extension the masculine nation-state's and empire's, special occasions cannot be disrupted by commercial-minded agitators who want to "advertise" their cause.

He even seems to defend religion by having the Imperial Official talk of the Suffragetæ's interference with holy rites. In "The Gala Programme," Saki utterly reverses his usual rebellious order. The suffragettes' disruptions reveal their inhumanity and inferiority, not their fierce non-conformity. Saki suggests that women are not fit to "help" men conduct the civil affairs of government because of their "wild indulgence in tumult, destruction, and defiance of all authority." Any male "official" and any object or event symbolic of patriarchy, the nation-state, and empire is preserved, while the rebellious women, those people of "wild indulgence" whom Saki typically champions in his stories, are slaughtered. Yet again, the narrator-author who offers "all sorts" of dissenting females in so many stories turns on these Suffragetæ, showing them to be not only as mad as the hyæna that eats so many of them, but deserving of a brutally insensitive, patriarchy-sustaining, savagely satirical narrative which reduces suffragettes to beasts murdered by their own bloody and senseless un-womanliness.

Saki's other two suffragette satires take place in the London of the time. An aristocratic uncle tells his nephew, recently returned from Mexico, the story of "The Threat" in his favourite restaurant. In this utterly patriarchal setting, then, Sir Lulworth Quayne talks of the agitators for women's suffrage as "'promoters'" who have "'showed considerable enterprise in devising and putting into action new methods for achieving their ends'" (462), turning what could be seen as Saki-esque disruptions to the norm into business strategies (Saki thinks little of commerce, as shown, for instance, in "Clovis on the Alleged Romance of Business"). Generally, Quayne tells his nephew and the preferably male reader, "'they were a nuisance and weariness to the flesh, but there were times when they verged on the picturesque'" (462), dismissing their political struggles as quaintness.[98] He tells his nephew of the effort by suffragettes to loose parrots chanting pro-suffrage slogans at a royal procession, a ploy negated by anti-suffrage campaigners' counter-chanting parrots. Then some suffragettes destroyed hundreds of pictures at the Royal Academy, which was seen as a much-needed curatorial improvement. Finally, Quayne notes, "'of course the great idea for their master-stroke of strategy came from a masculine source'" (463). The New Woman meets the dandy figure: the suffragettes, who need a separate "'thinking department,'" get their great idea from Waldo Orpington, a "'frivolous little fool'" who may have admired Lena Dubarri, the agitators' cerebral "captain-general" (463). Lena kisses him in gratitude, an exceptional act for such an unloving, unwomanly creature: "'She declared afterwards that he was the first man she had ever kissed'" (464). The suffragettes collect a vast sum of money from their supporters in order to erect replicas of the Victoria Memorial (in front of Buckingham Palace) all over the country. The Prime Minister, appalled,

> ". . . brought a Bill into Parliament forthwith and successfully appealed to both Houses to pass it through all its stages within the week. And that is how we got one of the most glorious measures of the century."
>
> "A measure conferring the vote on women?" asked the nephew.
>
> "Oh, dear, no. An act which made it a penal offence to erect commemorative statuary anywhere within three miles of a public highway." (465)

Thus the mannish suffragettes' attempts to unman the state, by co-opting and mass-reproducing the royal, national patriarchy's special phallic monument — """"that erection confronting one wherever one went"""" (465) — to a queen who was anti-suffrage,[99] are quickly quashed. In Saki's suffragette stories, the assumption that the easy solution will be reached — suffrage for women — is always brutally undercut by the patriarchy's easier and more violent resumption of control. The antagonism of suffragettes, unlike the trickery of Saki's female protagonists, remains unfulfilled because it is always rendered, from the outset of these mocking catcall-narratives, an impossible and empty threat.

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[98] Quayne's name and his attitude to the suffragettes suggest "**quaint**, *sb.*[1] *Obs. rare*," meaning "cunt" (*OED*, Volume XII, p. 968), and "quean," a term from early Middle English suggesting a "bold, impudent, or ill-behaved woman; a jade, hussy" (1007), though this word later came to be used as slang for a "male homosexual of effeminate appearance" (1008).

[99] A *Daily Express* article from the early 1910s noted:

The most vicious expression of anti-suffragettism, however, comes with Munro-Saki's and Pat's "The Metamorphoses of Lobelia Tabb, Suffragette" (*The Bystander*, March 12, 1913). The nature of Saki's and illustrator Pat's collaboration is unknown. To what extent did Saki advise Pat on the drawings? Given Munro's own artistic bent, as shown in his many drawings included in his sister's memoir,[100] Munro/Saki likely offered suggestions to Pat about the details of the illustrations, including the specific politicians of the time he wished to see caricatured. Regardless, the satire's extreme nastiness is pushed so far that, as with his anti-dandyism and anti-Semitism in 1913 with *When William Came*, such militant opposition in the text alone reveals Munro-Saki's masculine anxieties. The two-page verse satire with its accompanying drawings reads thus:

> That the greatest woman in public life in England during the last century was unalterably opposed to 'Votes for women' is shown by a letter by her and quoted by Mr Sidney Lee in his biography of Queen Victoria.
>
> In 1870 Queen Victoria wrote:
>
> The Queen is most anxious to enlist every one who can speak or write to join in checking this mad, wicked folly of 'Women's Rights,' with all its attendant horrors on which her poor feeble sex is bent, forgetting every sense of womanly feeling and propriety.
>
> God created man and woman different – then let them remain each in their own position.
>
> Tennyson has some beautiful lines on the difference of men and women in 'The Princess'. Woman would become the most hateful, heartless and disgusting of human beings were she allowed to unsex herself: and where would be the protection which man was intended to give the weaker sex? (McMillan 101)

[100] The drawings, which are usually of animals and sometimes illustrate verse, show: churchgoers on "Missionary Sunday" (644), an Englishman and an Indian confronted by a snorting buffalo while playing "Golf in the Wild West" (646, 648-49), a girl who sings hymns to a lion (651), marauding bears in "Elisha and the Mocking Children" (653), the dog "Gillie" (657), Munro's "tiger-kitten" in Burma (665), and an encounter between a grass-carrying man and a mare in Burma (669).

VERSE	ILLUSTRATION
A Suffragette Lobelia was, She early left this life because (She had the rottenest of luck) She too sincerely hunger-struck.	[a woman holds a hammer in her right hand, with her left pointing at a sign reading "VOTES FOR WOMEN"]
Mere death her spirit could not tame, A super-nuisance she became: On every club she made her raids —They slew her with the ace of spades.	[a wasp is shown up close that] [has ruined four gentlemen's card game, and two of them are trying to kill it]
She wrecked, with penetrating scorn, The après-midi of the Faun; And now another shape she wore, She propaganda'd more and more.	[a wasp pursues a man in a faun outfit who is bounding away] [a rabid and/or mad dog runs away from a bowler-hatted man]
Fierce androphobia winged her feet, She bit three men in Downing Street. The men were Pasteurised—her bark, Was silenced in St. James's Park.	[two men, perhaps political figures, have been bitten; the dog bites another on the left buttock] [a Navy admiral raises his sword and soldiers blow up the dog with cannon and rifle fire]
Then took she yet another shape, The larger, fiercer breed of ape. She met a military man, Who in the wrong direction ran.	[an ape screeches at fleeing, thick-lipped, loincloth- or fez-wearing Africans in a desert] [an explorer of the day on a rearing camel spears the diminished ape]
It scarcely served her wrath to cool, To find herself a boy at school; She sought the other boys to vex —And now she really loathes the sex.	[six smiling schoolboys hold down an anguished lad and two of them raise scrub-/hairbrushes to paddle the victim's buttocks as another boy, holding a brush, rushes to join in]

Saki's favourite theme of metamorphosis is rarely connected with women, although in "Laura," the narrator approvingly describes the wished-for metamorphoses of a naughty single woman who constantly twits her friend's husband and eventually turns into a boy. Here, however, the story begins with Lobelia's death, in a flippant reference to the actual, extreme hunger-strike protests made by suffragettes. Metamorphosis just happens to Lobelia, and the satire suggests that she is not just a "super-nuisance" but a pest who must be eradicated. While Laura became an otter, Lobelia turns into disparaging concepts of woman — a wasp, a rabid bitch — and then an ape, a mannish animal that, in a racist caricature, is associated with a lesser, savage race of men (suffragettes are never likened to patriarchal, stereotypically noble animals in Saki's stories, such as gallant horses, regal eagles, or kingly lions). Finally, Lobelia becomes a tormented boy, much like the object of Comus's punishment in *The Unbearable Bassington*. The true malformation, then, was Lobelia all along. She has reverted to what she should have been, a stunted, dandyish boy who "really loathe[d] the sex" he teased and was tormented by in turn in public school. A trouble-making, militant suffragette is nothing but a frustrated, perversely masochistic non-man.

Yet "The Metamorphoses of Lobelia Tabb" best reveals, beneath its seemingly simple viciousness, the ambivalence of Munro-Saki. Munro's membership in the Cocoa Tree Club and his love for bridge appears in the scene of Lobelia the wasp irritating some card-playing club-men, while Munro's well-reported co-hosting of a party for Nijinsky, renowned in England for his performance in *L'Après-midi d'un faune* merges once again in *The Bystander* with a Saki piece (Nijinsky talks to the Liberal Whip in the first of Saki's "Heart-To-Heart Talks" published in that paper [July 17, 1912]. Thus suffragettes threaten the order of Munro's private world, both his men's club and his artistic world (although an interest in a male ballet dancer suggests, at least to modern eyes, a homosocial interest shading into homoeroticism[101]). A bastion of patriarchy, "the late Victorian cult of both upper- and lower-class 'clubland' was an almost exclusively, and often aggressively, masculine sphere" (Harris 27).[102] The club gentlemen kill Lobelia Tabb, and her next two killers are military; they slay her in front of imperial symbols: a troop fires on the dogged woman with their full arsenal in St. James's Park, and then a military man spears the man-aping agitator in the desert, the pyramids and Sphinx small behind the triumphant conqueror on his rearing camel, the white man so clearly superior to the fleeing natives of the prior drawing. Here is Munro-Saki's exhortation to Munro, as with *When William Came*, to be the strong, manly soldier. Finally, Lobelia Tabb becomes the whipping-boy of Comus types, and this is Munro-Saki's most explicit warning to Munro that he must not loathe or betray his sex by becoming effeminate; he must, instead, be properly militant, unlike the feminine, faux-soldier suffragettes. Lobelia Tabb, then, becomes what a Saki, co-opted by Munro, warns Munro he must not become: an effeminate man. Munro-Saki's attack on Lobelia Tabb, and perhaps every one of his suffragette satires, is an increasing attack on Munro. Saki's, and ultimately Munro-Saki's, suffragette satires are explicitly aimed at patriarchy-attacking, masculine power-aspiring women, but implicitly directed at a patriarchy-undermining, dandy-defending, sexually unorthodox (and thus, by the vague notions of the day, effeminate) Munro. Saki's antagonism towards aunts and suffragettes is in fact a masked revulsion against Munro's effeminate-seeming masculinity. Thus Saki, and most obviously Munro-Saki in "The

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[101] Cecil William Mercer recalls at some length Munro's enthusiastic shepherding of Mercer, Mercer's parents, and Mercer's aunt to a ballet, "Old China," playing at The Empire, which Munro had seen "more than once" (Lambert 35).

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[102] As a soldier, Munro set up, perhaps half-jokingly, his own clubs, launching a "Creeper's Club" during training and "The Back Kitchen Club" in France in 1916; see Langguth 270-71.

In *When William Came*, the German occupation of England means that Murrey Yeovil's two clubs have closed their doors, and the new one he visits briefly has far too much of the "'alien element'" (787), with a Jew and many of the Teutonic invaders present. In a conversation between Yeovil and Hubert Herlton, an old acquaintance, the metaphor of masculine England as a club is clear, and Herlton poses, in miniature, the question of remaining in an occupied, emasculated England that Yeovil contemplates throughout the novel: "'I suppose you wonder, why remain a member under those conditions?'" (787) Herlton, it turns out, is literally a sell-out, as he sells goods from the club to conquered and conquerors alike, while it falls on the shoulders of that recent club of boys, Baden-Powell's Boy Scouts, to save the fallen nation at the close of the novel.

Metamorphoses of Lobelia Tabb, Suffragette," scapegoats supposedly unwomanly, patriarchy-usurping women for Munro's self-perceived unmanly, non-patriarchal masculinity and exhorts — through the imperial patriarchy's murder of suffragettes, particularly the army's and the colonial explorer's slaying of Lobelia — Munro to become a military man, a defender of king and country, and rid his selves forever of that same-sex-loathing, dandy-ish, unmanly schoolboy within. This satire is Munro-Saki's work of "propaganda" aimed squarely at Munro, and while it may be "androphobia" that wings Lobelia's feet, it is the dread of not being a staunch Englishman that moves Munro-Saki's pen here. Thanks to a Munro-co-opted Saki, "The Metamorphoses of Lobelia Tabb" is the starkest insight we have into the masculinity-based ambivalence of Munro and Saki. This satire is nothing less than a selves-warning of what Munro must not be — effeminate — and what he should have and can still, in part, aspire to become: a military man, a patriotic patriarch.

As women's roles in British society seemed increasingly to be in a state of flux, Saki, seemingly in agreement with Munro, holds to a rigid opposition of suffrage; such opposition "appears to have been more closely linked to personal temperament, bachelor lifestyles, old-boy networks, and fondness for masculine clubland than to membership of any distinctive social or political group" (Harris 30), as Munro-Saki's "The Metamorphoses of Lobelia Tabb" clearly shows. Yet, probably not unlike many anxious Edwardian men, Munro-Saki's joint opposition to suffragettes only masks a repressed inner fear, for "men's power *vis-à-vis* women has [long] partly depended on maintaining a veil over masculinity itself" (Tosh, "The Making of Masculinities" 57). Suffragettism threatened Munro's hope of becoming an assertive, military Englishman and exacerbated

Munro's concern that Saki's defence of unorthodox masculinities aligned him with patriarchy-threatening effeminacy. Thus an especially vicious "language of physical violence" pervades Munro-Saki's satires, as with much anti-suffrage literature (Kent 180), and the repressing-displacing Munro-Saki, like other suffrage-opponents, "strip[s] [the suffragette] of humanity" and by "reducing her to . . . animal characteristics . . . present[s] her as subhuman" (210) and unworthy of respect or equal citizenship. Militant women brought out, in their male opponents, the sexual violence and brutal militancy of men (Kent 174), and suffragettes elicited from Munro-Saki a darker, repressed animosity borne of self-loathing. Munro-Saki's anti-suffragette fury is a displacement of his feared male inadequacy and, if "the advent of suffrage militancy served to throw into contention competing claims among men to represent upright, stalwart manliness" (Holton 114), it also provided Munro with an opportunity to deny his own masculine anxieties and assert his opposition to an effeminate dilution of the male status quo — pro-suffrage males were often dismissed as "effeminate weaklings and degenerates" (114) — through the co-opting of the usually rebellious Saki in a backlash against suffragettism, a movement whose militancy was too close to male militarism for Munro's liking.

Just as some Victorian writers, as Carol Christ shows in "Victorian Masculinity and the Angel in the House," each offered "an over-simplified conception of gender distinctions, a rigid insistence on labelling some forms of behaviour 'masculine' and others 'feminine'" (Dyhouse 128) in an attempt to simplify and clarify their own masculine-identity anxieties, Munro-Saki draws the line at imperial, military action as masculine. Suffragettism exceeds pranks and trickery; their anti-government and anti-patriarchy position was supported by physically rebellious, property-destroying, explicitly political, organized aims and social disruptions which were too much like male militancy. Munro was raised by a faux-patriarchy of aunts, yet influenced by a father and patriarchy that was heavily entrenched in the Victorian ideal of the empire-protecting, manly soldier, and Saki's satires of suffragettes are textually murderous attacks on women who are trying to gain or even overthrow patriarchal power with masculine, military methods.

Saki's offensive against aunts and suffragettes is an attack on martial women who endorse heterosexual marriage or want to become part of the establishment; with the advent of World War I, Munro-Saki embraced a martial movement that was uncompromised by an association with women and in which Munro could fully participate and so assert his British, imperial manliness, all the more publicly with the complicity of a war-promoting Saki. In *When William Came*, Munro-Saki even appeals to a figure who would have been Saki's usual target of mockery, the Scottish-blooded, aunt-like Eleanor, Dowager Lady Greymarten, "the ruling spirit at Torywood" (772). An advocate for the poor, she is, more importantly, a tireless champion for "her idea of the Right, and above all, for the safety and sanity of her Fatherland" (773). This old woman puts most of the spiritless men in occupied England to shame, yet she is notably in the service of the patriarchy, "her Fatherland." Aware of her inferior position, she tells Murrey Yeovil that, if she had his "'youth'" and "'sex,'" she would travel about as "'a counter-agent to the agents of the *fait accompli*'" sweeping the conquered nation (775). Munro-Saki uses the very aunt figure that Saki so often mocks in a shaming call-to-arms, for if the dowager, a single member of the weaker sex, is more loyal to the patriarchy than Englishmen, isn't the nation doomed? Two years later, Munro would again emphasize the inferiority of women even as he used them to emphasize the effeminacy of those who did not care about the war. In Munro's 1915 essay, "An Old Love," he writes that "one cannot call" those males who are uninterested in fighting "womanish – the women of our race are made of different stuff" (207). The women of the English or British "race" are not even *better* than the pacifist non-men whom Munro spurns, but are merely cut from a different cloth.

Saki's independent, trickster female characters are closely related to the 1890s "New Women" and are not just female version of his dandies, but when the political-minded successors to the New Woman, the suffragette — who was painted as a pseudo-man, just as the 1890s dandy was — appeared and opposed the patriarchy, she threatened to confuse effeminacy with military manliness and to have an equal say in the nation's policies, imperial, military, and otherwise, thus proposing to turn the nation, as Rupert Brooke felt it had already become, into "a country 'ruled by women' who had feminised men." (Rutherford 59). Dandy and suffragette alike were now the enemies of Munro's father's British imperialist, military masculinity. And so Munro-Saki turns against Saki's dandies and heroines in his vicious defence of the British imperial male establishment against a lesser sex that was using exclusively male, militant means in an attempt to gain equality. In *When William Came* — a novel in which many women are variously complicit with the German occupiers, from Mrs. Mentieth-Mendelsohnn and Yeovil's wife Cicely to Joan Mardle and (possibly Jewish) Lady Shalem — dandy and New Woman merge in Gorla Mustelford, a formerly "'rather serious flapper who thought the world was in need of regeneration and was not certain whether she would regenerate it or take up miniature painting'" (721). She now performs "suggestion dancing" (721), although her fern dance mostly suggests a pathetic imitation of Nijinsky's faun dance, which Munro and Saki seemed to equally revere. If Gorla, a New Woman- and suffragette-like figure of mockery — Murrey Yeovil remarks that she looks childish or "rather like a wagtail in energetic pursuit of invisible gnats and midges" (744) — now suggests only degeneration, as do the pathetic dandy figures of *When William Came*, the Boy Scouts, that young force of military masculinity, are Munro-Saki's sole hope for English regeneration. Gorla may take her pathetic art seriously, but Saki, now co-opted by Munro, looks only to an ordered, resolutely patriotic, male life for salvation, resorting to the irony and laughs of his art only as agit-prop attacks on the threats to the British empire.

Yet the bitterest irony and last laugh came with post-war suffrage. For the bloody trenches to which Munro and so many other Edwardian men rushed in 1914 in order to defend King and country and prove British manliness saw such a slaughter of patriotic boys and men that, in large part out of thanks to the women who helped keep the domestic economy going during wartime, women were granted the right to vote:

> In the end the whole movement fizzled out in an unnoticed corner while the manhood of the Western world destroyed itself with lemming-like obedience. In January 1918 a clause in the Representation of the People Act quietly gave the vote to women over thirty. A few months later women were made eligible for Parliament. (Crow 225)

Chapter 3

"CROSS CURRENTS"
Anti-Semitism, Slavic Europe, and Imperial Britishness in Saki's Fiction

The rat is underneath the piles.
The jew is underneath the lot.
— T.S. Eliot, "Burbank with a Baedeker, Bleistein with a Cigar," 1925

"At first we were confused. The East thought that we were West, while the West considered us to be East. Some of us misunderstood our place in this clash of currents, so they cried that we belong exclusively to one side or the other. But I tell you, Irinej, we are doomed by fate to be the East on the West, and the West on the East, to acknowledge only heavenly Jerusalem beyond us, and here on earth—no one."
— St. Sava to Irinej, 13th century (qtd. in Bakić-Hayden and Hayden 1)

When Saki's attitude towards Jews and Slavs are examined, his dependent dissidence is revealed as complex shifts from thoughtful tolerance to rejection and from displacement to projection. Saki's veiled, and Munro-Saki's explicit, scapegoating of masculine anxiety onto suffragettes is only the most obvious of Saki's bigoted, reactionary stances in his fiction. Saki often subscribes to the knee-jerk anti-Semitism and casual xenophobia of imperial, ethnocentric Edwardian England. Yet such conventional prejudices against others masked anxieties of the self. Pre-Saki, Hector Hugh Munro's painting of drunken devils on the walls of a Davos hotel in 1892 suggests, as Carey notes, that such "Malicious damage can be accepted as fun so long as the victims are foreigners and business people . . . and so long as the perpetrators are high-spirited young English men" (xi). Munro's time in Bedford Grammar School would have shown him that "manliness in Victorian public schools . . . crucially involves the issues of games and militarism" (Vance 195) and his time with his father, Colonel Munro, immersed him, like so many boys and men of his time, in a late-Victorian world where there was an "increasing glorification of a more muscular, militaristic masculinity, in alliance with British imperialist expansion" (Lynne Segal 106-07). As already discussed, Saki's endorsements of unorthodox sexuality and even female independence in many stories would have conflicted with the conventional social views of Munro's late-Victorian childhood and Edwardian London, leading to Munro-Saki's vicious denunciation of unmanly threats to British imperial patriarchy in *When William Came*, anti-aunt stories, and suffragette satires. Yet while Munro-Saki's masculine anxiety often turns on and scapegoats figures who represented unorthodox or effeminate masculinity, or feminine threats to the patriarchy, Munro-Saki's anxiety is also displaced and sublimated into attacks on more visible targets. Saki's uneasy anti-Semitism and vacillating opinions on Slavs must be seen in this light. From a psychoanalytic point of view, since Munro-Saki's anxiety about Munro's manliness would have been unconsciously perceived as a self-threat or deficiency, as Chodorow points out, such suffering is often "projectively experienced as coming from without" (241); internal shame metamorphoses into external blame. In the imperial masculine imagining, an easily identifiable "Other" served well as a scapegoat for inner tensions and perceived social failures, and there was no more obvious Other in Edwardian London than the Jew and, in Munro's travels as a correspondent in Eastern Europe, the Slav.

The failure of Saki to ultimately overturn Munro's anti-Jewish sentiments or break out of the "Oriental" framework he conformed to in his views of Slavs is also typical of the author's dissidence within stories that ostensibly exhibit what Jonathan Dollimore in *Sexual Dissidence* calls the "values of the dominant" (81), values which Munro the Edwardian gentleman could not escape. Thus, despite his occasional dissent with the prevailing view, Saki too often falls back on anti-Semitism, a dominant social prejudice in Edwardian England, in his fiction. As war approached, a patriotic Munro merges with Saki to write a nationalist, anti-Semitic, call-to-arms novel. Saki's failure to overcome contemporary antipathy towards Jews reveals Saki's inability to permanently break with or radically question Munro's Edwardian society.

ANTI-SEMITISM IN EDWARDIAN ENGLAND

By the late 1800s, religious "anti-Judaism" of the medieval period had morphed into racial "modern anti-Semitism." Whereas "[t]raditional Christian anti-Judaism saw Jews as religiously, not racially, inferior" (Perry and Schweitzer 7) and focussed on "the myth of deicide . . . modern anti-Semitism . . . is powered by nationalist and racist myths that castigate Jews as an alien and dangerous race threatening the survival of the nation" (5). According to Bernard Lewis, the "term anti-Semitism was first used in 1879, and seems to have been invented by one Wilhelm Marr, a minor Jew-baiting journalist" (81).[103] Long before Hilaire Belloc's and G. K. Chesterton's anti-Jewish writings in the Edwardian era, a vicious strain of anti-Semitism could be found in English literature, which "includes such varied figures as Barabas the Jew of Malta, Fagin, Svengali" (97). Todd M. Endelman notes that

> in novels, newspapers, and the theatre, malicious or crude images of Jews were common fare. Charles Dickens, William Makepeace Thackeray, and Anthony Trollope, as well as dozens of less talented scribblers, unhesitatingly incorporated grasping, lisping Jews into their fiction and journalism. . . . They manipulated stereotypical Jewish characteristics for artistic ends because they knew intuitively that these would strike a chord with their audience. (151)[104]

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[103] The first citation in the *OED* of "anti-Semitism" comes from the *Athenæum*, September 3, 1881.

[104] The news media offered their own examples of how, with regard to representing Anglo-Jewry, "Recourse to negative representations was routine and unthinking" (Endelman 152). In one instance, a

In 1858, Jews were at last emancipated in England, and the final legal cavil concerning their recognition as citizens was removed in 1871. Still, until "the late 1870s, Jews did not loom large in the political or cultural imagination of the English" (Endelman 150), and while Great Britain and its English-speaking colonies "were by no means free of the various anti-Jewish mentalities that were part of their European heritage . . . in balance Jews encountered less fear and hostility in the nineteenth-century English-speaking world than they did in most of continental Europe" (Lindemann 240). The "relatively small numbers of Jews in the British Isles for most of the nineteenth century undoubtedly had much to do with the relatively low level of anti-Semitism there" (244); Jew-hatred in Victorian England became more pronounced, it seems, particularly in London, with the welcoming of Jewish immigrants by an ostensibly sympathetic government. From 1881 to 1914, late-Victorian and Edwardian Britain saw the migration of 120,000 to 150,000 Eastern European Jews (Endelman 127) to her shores in the wake of Russian pogroms (popular anti-Jewish riots) and other persecutions on the continent. These new residents' "poverty, occupations, and foreignness drew unwanted attention to them and native-born Jews alike, fueling the fires of xenophobia and antisemitism" (127). Both Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli's[105] supposedly pro-Oriental policy regarding

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Times reporter "drew on a common stock of crude popular images that marked Jews as alien and inferior" (152) in describing the 1852 celebratory reopening of the Great Synagogue in Duke's Place, London. He wrote of foul-smelling streets in the area, bejewelled Jewish men, nasal prayers, a barbaric, guttural babble of vocalizations, and the crowd as being of "'a distinct race'" that was "'not English'" (152). Textual stereotypes were reinforced by printed images. From its inception in 1841, the popular newspaper *Punch* often caricatured Jews as grubby, hook-nosed, scheming and unpatriotic (see Cowen 3-31), above captions such as "TEACHING THE YOUNG IDEA HOW TO STEAL" (Cowen 4) or "FAGIN'S POLITICAL SCHOOL" (30).

[105] Disraeli was England's first Jewish Prime Minister and also a novelist whose works often had Jewish heroes. Lindemann suggests that his admiring, uncritical works and political life made him, ironically, "both as a writer and even more as a personal symbol, the most influential propagator of the concept of race in the nineteenth century, particularly publicizing the Jews' alleged taste for power, their sense of

Turkey from 1875 to 1878 and accusations that Jewish London financiers and Johannesburg mine owners pushed England into the Boer War (1899-1902) led to the notion "that Jews were cosmopolitan and unpatriotic, committed above all to their far-flung material interests . . . [and] the contention that there was an international Jewish capitalist network capable of bending journalists and statesmen alike to its own ends. This view, moreover, was not confined to a lunatic fringe but was common in respectable Liberal and Labour circles" (153). Self-hating Jewish writers such as Julia Frankau, Amy Levy, and Leonard Merrick added to the negative portrayals of British Jewry when, from the late 1880s to 1906, they published novels "incorporating crude, anti-Semitic representations of Jews and Judaism, their object being to demonstrate their distance from other Jews" (170).[106] Oscar Wilde, Saki's most apparent influence and a writer whose plays Munro admired (according to an 1893 letter), was guilty of vile prejudice in his depiction of a Hebraic theatre manager in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891):

> "A hideous Jew,[107] in the most amazing waistcoat I ever beheld in my life, was standing at the entrance, smoking a vile cigar. He had greasy ringlets, and an enormous diamond blazed in the centre of a soiled shirt. . . . There was something about him, Harry, that amused me. He was such a monster." (49)
>
> . . . the fat Jew manager who met them at the door was beaming from ear to ear with an oily, tremulous smile. He escorted them to their box with a sort of pompous humility, waving his fat jewelled hands, and talking at the top of his

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superiority, their mysteriousness, their clandestine international connections, and their arrogant pride in being a pure race" (77). In 1875, Disraeli's Conservative government tolerated Turkish massacres of Bulgarian Christians; in broad terms, their continued support for Turkey against anti-Semitic Russia was seen by some as evidence of Disraeli's Jewishness influencing his foreign policy (249).

[106] In his discussion of self-hating Jews in Munro's time (170-1), Endelman notes a passage from Saki's first novel *The Unbearable Bassington*, which suggests Munro may have read Frankau, Levy, or Merrick:

> . . . "in England no one really is anti-Semitic."
> Youghal shook his head. "I know a great many Jews who are."
> (*The Penguin Complete Saki* 605)

[107] In some recent editions of the novel (e.g., Dell Laurel, Signet), "Jew" is changed to "man" here.

> voice. Dorian Gray loathed him more than ever. He felt as if he had come to look for Miranda and had been met by Caliban. (71)

If a respected, usually tolerant and progressive female modernist writer offers a fair measure of the Edwardian cultural climate, there was a generally accepted public atmosphere of anti-Semitism:

> While violence was unusual, verbal abuse was both common and unremarkable. It was found throughout English society; neither the well-born and the middle ranks nor the poor and the disreputable thought twice about discussing Jews in terms that the latter considered offensive. Poor Jews met with taunts and catcalls in streets and markets; well-to-do Jews with barbs and slights in drawing rooms and clubs. The Bloomsbury set, for example, which took pride in its contempt for convention, was entirely conventional in its contempt for Jews, despite Virginia Woolf's marriage to one. . . . In 1905, sailing with her brother Adrian to Portugal, [Virginia] wrote to a friend that there were 'a great many Portuguese Jews on board, and other repulsive objects, but we keep clear of them.' When Leonard [Virginia's future husband, an upper-middle-class, Cambridge-educated Brit and a non-practising Jew] proposed to her in 1912, she cited his Jewishness as an obstacle to accepting him. 'You seem so foreign,' she wrote him . . . (Endelman 163)

Saki's anti-Semitism appears early in his writings. What would prove to be his most popular fiction — the Reginald stories — was first published in the "Liberal-leaning [i.e. conservative] *Westminster Gazette*" (Forbes 241) from 1901 to 1903. In "Reginald at the Theatre," the Duchess tells Reginald that "'we're all part of the great Anglo-Saxon Empire,'" to which Reginald replies, "'Which for its part is rapidly becoming a suburb of Jerusalem. A very pleasant suburb, I admit, and quite a charming Jerusalem. But still a suburb'" (13). The urban, sophisticated Reginald, unsurprisingly, looks down his nose at anything suburban and middle-class, and while his overarching observation — that the British Empire is subordinate to Jerusalem — seems ludicrous to a reader today, such a charge was prominent around the turn of the nineteenth century. Colin Holmes notes in *Anti-Semitism in British Society, 1876-1939* that allegations of a Jewish conspiracy swirled around the Boer War, "with the claim that Jewish capitalists in South Africa received support from Jewish financial groups in Britain itself" (13). Saki's *The Westminster Alice* series of political satires includes criticism of the Conservative government's handling of the Boer War. Munro and Saki were probably aware of accusations, then, that "an organized international Jewish power was at work" in connection with the war, as J. A. Hobson suggested in *The Guardian* at the time (Holmes 67); such "belief in Jewish power, or at least in the extensive behind-the-scenes influence of Jewish financiers and capitalists, was solidly entrenched at this time in Great Britain" (Lindemann 363). Anti-Semitism in Edwardian England was insidious and widespread in Munro's social circles, as Robert Keith Middlemas explains:

> While in political terms Jews had been formally emancipated during the nineteenth century, there was still a great deal of hostility to their acceptance into polite society. Their number was still small in 1901—only 160,000 out of a total population of some 41.5 million—but emigration from Russia and Eastern Europe in the wake of pogroms and persecution had already enlarged the original community, and during Edwardian times this influx continued. By 1910 there were an estimated 238,000 Jews. However, the 'problem' as far as the upper-classes were concerned lay not with the poverty-stricken immigrant communities in the East End of London—source of much working-class antipathy and the genesis of the Aliens Act in 1905[108]—but with those members of the Jewish

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[108] The Aliens Act arose at least in part because of increasing public outcry over the immigration of supposedly unassimilable Eastern European Jews into the East End of London. Lindemann notes that

> in principle the bills were directed at all immigrants, but it was widely recognized that they reflected a particular concern about eastern European Jews. In testimony before a royal commission established in 1903 to study the issue of immigration, the point was made time and again that national feelings among eastern European Jews were of an essentially different quality from those of western Jews and of other immigrants. . . . the commission's report was pessimistic about the prospect of eastern European Jews becoming genuinely English in the foreseeable future . . . (368)

Endelman writes that "the basic strangeness of the immigrants . . . provoked indignation and unease. Unaccustomed to mass immigration . . . Englishmen regarded the establishment of foreign 'ghettos' in their midst with alarm. They regarded the aliens as filthy, clannish, indecent, impious, and, in the view of some, subversive. . . . Their fundamental grievance, of course, was that the immigrants were not English" (158). Crimes in East London brought out "anti-alien sentiment" (158) and there were gang attacks on Jews from 1898-1903 in London (162). Passed in 1905, the Aliens Act gave "immigration officers the right to deport any 'undesirable immigrant'. Flow of Jews [was] reduced by 40%" (Susser 28).

> community who had now amassed enough wealth to provide themselves and their children with the life-style that had, until then, been the prerogative of the privileged Gentile. (56)

Reginald's and Saki's anti-Semitism continues in "Reginald on Worries," where the young man notes, "Personally, I think the Jews have estimable qualities; they're so kind to their poor–and to our rich" (19). This stereotypical, accusatory picture of rich Jews moving among the economic elite touches on a double-edged sentiment regarding monied Jews who, though always treated as different and often regarded with suspicion, were increasingly tolerated by capitalists for their "kindness": "liberal sympathy paled into significance when set beside the simple fact that Jewish bankers and stockbrokers were a valuable source of investment tips and financial assistance to an aristocratic caste increasingly aware of the value of a positive bank balance" (Middlemas 57). Reginald's quip probably also stems from Saki's awareness of then-current notions in Liberal circles and elsewhere that, according to Holmes, "The South African War, the Marconi scandal and the Indian silver affair were all concerned with the behaviour of Jewish financiers and high ranking politicians" (81). Certainly Saki's two brief sentiments about Jews, as expressed through Reginald, play on the age-old image of Jews "as the personification of capitalism and materialism" (112). A. J. Langguth states that the Munro/Saki of his biography "was a product of his age, and his rebelliousness was spent on Christianity and conventional sexuality. Otherwise he accepted with the air he breathed the monarchy, the Empire, and a wariness toward Jews" (83).

MUNRO'S JEWISH ACCOUNTS

As Hector Hugh Munro left his literary pseudonym behind for a time and travelled to the Balkans, Russia, and Paris as a foreign correspondent for the *Morning Post*, he would have been well aware of the supposed dominance of Jews in journalism: "Jewish press power was the other agency which was regarded as furthering the advance of sectional Jewish interests" (Holmes 84). Conspiracy theories about Jewish finance, global dominance, and "press power" fanned simmering anti-Semitism, which could have been easily stoked by Munro's alter ego in those stories that focus on Edwardian high society or, on occasion, the world of newspapers (e.g., "The Yarkand Manner" and "Forewarned"). Yet Munro's travels through Europe seemed to lead him to, if not a brief tempering of the anti-Semitic notions expressed by Saki, at least a conflicted view of the chosen people. If, as Gillen argues, the adolescent Munro's earlier "extensive traveling [in Europe, 1889-90], besides giving Hector an excellent grounding in conversational French and German, allowed him to absorb the feel and atmosphere of *mitteleuropa* which in later years so often colored his fiction with an authenticity which only participation can give" and "helped to make Munro the true cosmopolitan he always remained under his occasional Tory insularity" (21), the journalist Munro's 1903-08 journeys through Eastern Europe, Russia, and France[109] revealed an increasingly conflicted "cosmopolitan" sympathy for Jews and oppressed minorities, years before a reversing, jingoistic Munro would co-opt Saki to attack cosmopolitanism in *When William Came*.

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[109] Munro's attitudes may have been influenced by French anti-Semitism, which flared up in the 1880s with the Boulangists (see Lindemann 216-17), Assumptionists (219-20), and other anti-Jewish movements, but was most widely expressed during the internationally reported, notorious Dreyfus affair, 1894-99, when anti-Dreyfusards considered the French officer of Jewish origin, accused of treason, "to be in the pay of the Jewish Syndicate" (231) and Alfred Dreyfus was often slandered with anti-Semitic remarks.

Such reports by Munro as his March 29, 1904 article about a Russian custom house, which mentions "Jewish damsels," make note of Hebraic people without resorting to stereotype or prejudice. Yet Munro's experiences amongst Catholic majorities in the Balkans and Poland would have shown him that the minority Jewish communities were regarded as separate and alien, and that in "Eastern Europe, the Jews with their own separate language, culture, and way of life were self-evidently a race as the term was then used" (Lewis 96). Indeed, as evidenced later by a knowing comment in *The Unbearable Bassington* (1912), Saki seems to be acutely aware of how Munro's Eastern European travels shaped his bias:

> "You are not very fond of the Jews," said Elaine.
> "I've travelled and lived a good deal in Eastern Europe," said Youghal.
> (605)

In an April 5, 1904 item from Warsaw, Munro casually resorts to language that paints Jews as a dominant, inhuman, pest-like force:

> A certain percentage of Warsaw's industrial activity is in foreign hands, and a good deal of its commerce is controlled by the Jews. The Russians wish to keep the Jews out of their territory with as much success apparently as a cow in summer might desire to be rid of flies. One does not see how there could well be more Jews than there are at present in Warsaw, and the elaborate and sometimes vexatious passport precautions aimed at keeping them out seem more courageous than hopeful. It is like trying to lock the stable door when it is too full to be shut.

In a piece that appeared in the *Morning Post* two days later, Munro seems to expect Jews to be idle as well, noting with surprise that in Warsaw, "the greatest animation, curiously enough, seem[s] to exist in the Jewish quarters."

As Munro spent more time in the Polish city and, afterwards, witnessed the treatment of protestors and minorities in St. Petersburg, his correspondence seemed to reveal a softening of his once-hardened attitude towards Jews. Langguth writes about Munro's time in Warsaw in 1904:

> With its huge ghetto population, [the city] exposed Hector to more Jews than he had ever known, and his reflections on the subject of anti-Semitism showed that he had not resolved his ambiguity. Everything in his experience with Jews seems to have been positive, yet he could never overcome the ingrained suspicions of his time, country and social class. (123-24)

An article in the June 3, 1904 issue of the *Morning Post* offers the cloak of neutrality to thinly veil Munro's ambivalence as he pretends not to pass judgment while, in fact, struggling to generalize about and evaluate the Polish Jew's character:

> To the Jew in Warsaw is meted out a wealth of disfavour and contempt that is hardly pleasant to witness. The British stranger, however, who normally lives far from any personal contact with these huge Jewish populations, is not altogether in a position to pass judgment on this deeply-seated Anti-Semitic rancour. It pervades all classes of Polish society . . . (124)
>
> Personally I have found the Jew in several Slav-inhabited countries easier to deal with than some of his Christian neighbours. He understands that it takes two to make a bargain, and if he haggles it is always with the view of doing business; with the Slav haggling seems often to be carried out on the principle of art for art's sake. (124)

Munro's reporting is, typically of the time, replete with categorization and essentialism. He writes of inherent national characters, summing up the Russian or the Slav for his readers back in England. His assessment of "the Jew" in Warsaw is initially imbued with sympathy for their persecution, though this is quickly undercut by his sudden and hypocritical unwillingness to judge another society's prejudice, when he has been heretofore making sweeping judgments about Jews, other groups, and "Polish society." Munro reveals a respect for "the Jew" in some Slavic countries only on the limited terms of the stereotype of Jews as wily merchants[110]; still, this back-handed compliment is part of what seems to be an effort by Munro to chart, for his mainly conservative, middle- and upper-class readers, a more open-minded approach to a group so casually maligned back home.

From Munro's few elaborations on the city's Jewish population in his 1904-05 reports from St. Petersburg, Langguth argues that "Hector's attitude toward Jews was undergoing an evolution. As recently as Warsaw, he had been inclined to think the Poles were justified in resenting the sure business instincts of the Jewish minority. Now, in St. Petersburg, he was wondering whether the real problem was not more basic. Perhaps Jews were simply smarter than their neighbors, and if so, what could be done about that?" (138) Langguth detects a "subdued trace of gratification" in Munro's report on Jews in Little Russia "organizing armed resistance to threats of attacks by Christians" (138). While still guilty of base assumptions, Munro, finally noticing the socio-economic context, sympathetically writes in an August 22, 1905 article of "the alert and keenly-trained brainpower which makes the Jew such an awesome competitor in the Russian world. With the same, or perhaps fewer, possibilities and with many disadvantages added to those under which the youthful Russian labours, the Jewish working-class lad begets himself an education which seems to leave very little out of its purview" (Langguth 139).

SAKI'S SATIRE OF ANTI-SEMITISM

In 1908, Munro settled down in London to write. Saki's story "The Unrest-Cure," published in *The Westminster Gazette* on April Fool's Day, 1910 (Thrane 142), and collected in the 1911 anthology *The Chronicles of Clovis*, features the newly titled successor of Reginald the lethargic wit, Clovis the devious prankster. More active and slyly ironic than Reginald, the train-riding Clovis overhears the aptly named Mr. Huddle, a "solid, sedate individual" living near "Slowborough," worry aloud to a friend about his utter complacency and adherence to habit (127). The elderly middle-aged man and his sister like everything just in its place and "have settled down into a deep groove" (127).[111] Mr. Huddle's friend suggests an "Unrest-cure," which is the opposite of a restorative vacation and requires a jarring disturbance of the routine. Clovis decides to pay a visit to Mr. Huddle's safe, sheltered world, setting into motion Saki's usual comic plot of a violent upheaval of the mundane life of the bourgeoisie or upper crust by an outsider figure.

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[110] In an article that appeared the following day, June 4, 1904, Munro writes of a "decently prosperous-looking Jewish youth" who tried to sell him a book "and with the immemorial patience of his race seemed prepared to spend the summer with me rather than fail in his quest."

Yet Clovis' particular upheaval in "The Unrest-Cure" is rather more shocking and, for a modern reader, potentially offensive than any of the comic disruptions in Saki's other stories.[112] He telegrams the Huddle siblings to announce the arrival of the Bishop in their house because the local rectory is unavailable, then promptly follows the message by announcing himself to be Stanislaus, the Bishop's confidential secretary, and mysteriously declaring that the Bishop is only "ostensibly" visiting a confirmation class

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[111] The character of Mr. Huddle is tinged by the stock comic figure of the slow, credulous country bumpkin, who is taken in here by the urban sophisticate Clovis. Thus it could be argued that Saki plays with a minor variation on one stereotype in order to subvert another in this story.

[112] Few Saki critics have touched on the apparent anti-Semitism in "The Unrest-Cure." Otto confusingly and self-defeatingly states in his 1969 dissertation that "'The Unrest-Cure' . . . is not likely to appear in school anthologies because of its open anti-Semitism. It is humorous anti-Semitism, but all anti-Semitism has been made obscene by the processes of history and Hitler. We may smile at Samuel Johnson's hostility toward the Scottish people, but Saki's similar attitude toward the Jews is in bad taste because of a tragic modern period that has set the Jews apart from the Scottish and all other peoples" (124-25). Lane remarks in an endnote that the story is "horrific in its pre-Holocaust fantasy and anti-Semitism" (284). Recently, however, the story took centre stage in a 2000 Saki anthology edited by Will Self, entitled *The Unrest-Cure and Other Beastly Tales*, evidence perhaps that modern readers (or at least Self) recognize the story's satirical use, not endorsement, of Jew-hatred.

(129). Then he partakes of lunch. Later that afternoon, Clovis tells Mr. Huddle that the Bishop is now there, in the library, but must not be disturbed, and proclaims,

> "Tonight is going to be a great night in the history of Christendom." . . . "We are going to massacre every Jew in the neighbourhood."
>
> "To massacre the Jews!" said Huddle indignantly. "Do you mean to tell me there's a general rising against them?" (130)

Clovis assures him that it is all the Bishop's idea, to which Huddle replies, "'But–the Bishop is such a tolerant, humane man'" (130). Clovis answers, "'That is precisely what will heighten the effect of his action. The sensation will be enormous'" (130). Clovis tells Mr. Huddle that the Bishop will escape via a car to the coast, then sail away on a yacht, and that there are twenty-six Jews on his list who will be dealt with "'all the more thoroughly'" (130), a disturbingly prescient phrase given events in Germany twenty-five years later. Even more eerily, after Clovis tells his frantic host that "'some Boy-scouts [are] helping us as auxiliaries'," Mr. Huddle cries, "'This thing will be a blot on the Twentieth Century!'" (131) Clovis informs him that his house will be the "'blotting-pad'" and that he has sent pictures of him and his sister to newspapers, as well as a sketch of the staircase, where most of the killing will be done.

Sir Leon Birberry, whom Mr. Huddle calls "'one of the most respected men in the country'" (131), is also Jewish, apparently, and drives over in response to a telegram sent to him by Clovis but pretending to be from James Huddle. Nearly hysterical, Huddle drags Birberry upstairs, leaving Clovis alone to calmly finish tea. Mr. Paul Isaacs, a local "shoemaker and parish councillor" (132), also arrives at Clovis' forged request and is whisked away by the terrified Huddle. Clovis reports that the Boy-scouts made a mistake and killed the postman by accident; Clovis' last announcement to Mr. Huddle is: "'The Bishop is sorry to hear that Miss Huddle has a headache. He is issuing orders that as far as possible no firearms shall be used near the house; any killing that is necessary on the premises will be done with cold steel. The Bishop does not see why a man should not be a gentleman as well as a Christian'" (132). Clovis then steals away and his horrified victims keep vigil until they are finally convinced the next day, by a gardener's boy and a postman, "that the Twentieth Century was still unblotted" (133).

As D. Dean Loganbill observes, "As usual Clovis [sic] in inverting conventional value judgements, is striking out in numerous directions. In one speech he has stripped the conventional facade away from self-proclaimed gentlemen, state church officials, and that peculiar variety of social-club member who refers to himself as 'Christian'" (133). Yet Loganbill never considers the inversion of anti-Semitism here, basically ignoring the presence of Jews in the story. In fact, Clovis' scheme, and Saki's point, far from naïvely exhibiting "open . . . humorous anti-Semitism" (Otto 124), is an ironic undercutting of the roots of Edwardian England's anti-Semitism. Saki often viciously satirizes the church in his stories, showing disdain for organized religion, and here Clovis immediately associates the massacre with "Christendom"; the slaughter will stain the church's name. The gentlemanly Christian church, of course, long fostered hatred for Jews by teaching that they did not believe that Jesus was the son of God and had killed him; thus Jews "were a deicide people wholly and eternally under a curse" (Parkes 65). James Parkes argues that "the normal pattern of Jewish—Gentile relations was [changed by] the action of the Christian Church" (60) and that there is an "appalling travesty of Jewish history which we encounter in the Church Fathers" (61). Clovis' proposed massacre of Jews is darkly reminiscent of Christians' systematic extermination of Jews in the Crusades and, more recently, the pogroms in Czarist Russia which began in 1881 and "attained an unequalled peak in 1903-4" (Holmes 3), bringing many Jews to England. Munro witnessed a swell in this last wave of attacks on Jews when he was in St. Petersburg from 1904-06. A telegram that arrives at the Huddles' aptly named refuge, "The Warren," is addressed to Clovis' alter ego, "Prince Stanislaus" (129), and Saki's use of a Slavic name for the feigned manager of a religious massacre may be a reference to the anti-Jewish sentiments that Munro observed while corresponding from Eastern Europe.

Horrified by but passively complicit in Clovis' imaginary massacre of the local Hebraic population, the Huddles cower in the face of the Church's pogrom, while the reader both laughs and is discomfited by the ease with which a complacent, rural English couple can believe that the local Jewry will be slaughtered in their house. If, as Bryan Cheyette notes in *Constructions of 'the Jew' in English Literature and Society, 1875-1945*, Hilaire Belloc and G. K. Chesterton "began to associate the confusion of national and religious boundaries with Jewish conspiracy theories that were also a dark double of the Roman Catholic Church" (204), Saki turns such a dynamic on its head by showing an easily believed Church conspiracy to eradicate innocent Jews. As Cheyette writes, "The Jewish-conspiracy theories, which were incorporated into many apocalyptic Edwardian pot-boilers, were a key feature historically of an Imperial semitic discourse" (67). Saki cleverly inverts this feature by having Christians seemingly conspire to kill Jews, who were typically the ones accused of forming "a conspiratorial body set on ruining and then dominating the rest of the world" (Holmes 63). The story is also concerned with ritual; Clovis' "unrest-cure" is meant to unsettle the Huddles' usual routine, but Clovis' calm taking of tea, his imaginary accomplices' "monstrous machinations" and his own "punctilious politeness" (132), the pre-arranged telegrams, and the planned use of the stairway as the killing-ground all smack not just of a genocidal "programme" (129), but a ritual killing, calmly and deliberately worked out. Such a sacrifice of Jews by the church is an ironic reversal of one of the primary claims of medieval anti-Judaism — that Jews carried out ritual murders and crucifixions of Gentiles. This popular calumny was largely initiated by the widely publicized killing of Hugh of Lincoln in 1255 and spread by such texts as Chaucer's "Prioress's Tale." Indeed, even in late nineteenth-century Europe, as Munro may well have been aware, there was a "wide circulation and academic endorsement of the blood libel" charge against Jews, and from "1867 [to] 1914, twelve charges of alleged ritual murder against Jews were tried by jury in German and Austro-Hungarian courts" (Lewis 107).

Yet Saki is not only condemning the anti-Jewish prejudice of that most hallowed of rural English institutions, the Church, but also suggesting, with Clovis' list of "'twenty-six'" Jews in rural Slowborough (130), that the countryside is not a place of Aryan purity, for non-Anglo-Saxon Brits can be found in villages as well as cities.[113] Thus "The Unrest-Cure" questions an Anglocentric myth that other Edwardian writers, and Munro-Saki, three years later in *When William Came*, promoted. As Jonathan Rutherford points out in *Forever England: Reflections on Masculinity and Empire*:

> By the end of the nineteenth century the theories of degeneracy had blended sin and crime into a medical discourse which proposed that the root of all social problems was a hereditary, personal pathology. Civilisation had enabled the 'unfit' to survive and unless they were checked the English race would be undermined and British imperialism would go the way of the Roman Empire and

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[113] The number of Jews in Britain in 1882 was approximately 46,000; in 1914, there were around 300,000 Jews (Susser 28). The vast majority, of course, lived in cities — by 1914, 88% of British Jews resided in London, Manchester, Leeds, Liverpool, Glasgow, and Birmingham (Endelman 130) — but there were known Jewish communities in smaller provincial centres (and of course there may have been many more Jews in small towns who never let their religion be known). In late nineteenth-century Devon, during Munro's childhood years in Pilton, both Exeter and Plymouth (280 Jews listed in an 1881 census) were home to Jewish communities (Susser 42). Coincidentally, the "Russian-Poland" hometown of five of the Plymouth Jewish men noted in records between 1879 and 1898 was transliterated as "Saki" (45).

> collapse from within. Sir Francis Galton took this social Darwinism to its logical conclusion in his theory and practice of Eugenics. . . . Eugenics provided some of the central tenets for the foundation of the welfare state and the intellectual encouragement for a revived and racialised sense of Englishness and manhood. It also turned people's attention to the countryside as a bastion against degeneracy . . . (55)

Rutherford explains that Baden-Powell, founder of the Boy Scouts, offered a "vision of the outdoor life" that was "resolutely anti-urban, masculine, anti-sensual and censorious of all expressions of sexuality . . . [it] drew upon the myth of the regenerative powers of rural England . . . the bulwark against emasculating decadence and the degenerative influences of civilisation. Old England was the repository of the nation's moral character" (56). Rupert Brooke, Chesterton, and Belloc, for instance, in his 1906 novel *Hills and the Sea*, saw the English countryside as a nationalist heartland "for the racial purity of 'us,'" where "unambiguous identity" could be found, according to Rutherford (57). Yet in "The Unrest-Cure" Saki sees the bucolic world of Mr. Huddle as fostering complacency and ennui; to destroy Huddle's false, dull Eden, Clovis the urban dandy pretends to have enlisted the Boy Scouts, those young defenders of John Bull's England, in the natural extension of an anti-cosmopolitan, pro-British campaign — the massacre of local Jews who are part of the quiet, humdrum community of Slowborough.

If, as Rutherford notes, the "figure of the Jew was endowed with the corrupting and destabilising influences of capitalism" and was "the representative figure of a cosmopolitanism which was undermining the historical continuity of Old England and its homogeneous people" (57), then Saki, through his trickster Clovis, attempts to expose and implode the myth of a countryside bastion of anti-Jewish Britishness in "The Unrest-Cure." Saki's dependent dissidence is revealed in the story's ironic exposure of anti-Semitism; relying on his bourgeois Christian public's assumptions about and popular stereotypes of Jews, Saki exploits and explodes these prejudices, turning them back on his audience by making the Church a conspiratorial body and showing both Huddle and the reader to be unwitting accomplices in an imaginary pogrom. By purposefully taking rural anti-Semitism to an ironic and blackly comic extreme, Saki subverts prevailing notions of a pure English countryside and places a cracked satiric mirror before the reader's own anti-Jewish sentiments.

Yet Saki's ironic, dissenting use of anti-Semitism in the story is not without ambiguity. In unsettling the modern reader and implicating him and her, along with brother and sister Huddle, in the acceptance of an imaginary pogrom, Saki's story is similar to the discomfiting joke about Hitler being found in Argentina. A man, walking the streets of Buenos Aires, sees someone who looks like the Führer. "Hey," he says, "you look just like Hitler." "I am Hitler," the moustached fellow replies, "I have come here to Argentina and am planning a second Holocaust. This time, I will kill ten thousand Jews and one clown." "Why one clown?" the man asks. "See?" Hitler answers, "I knew no one cares about the Jews." Saki's and Clovis' ruse, like the Hitler joke, exposes the listener's or reader's unwitting anti-Semitism even as it uses Jews, once again, as targets to be mocked and dismissed. Such an ironic exposure of anti-Semitism is problematic because it still depends on the notably different, unassimilable Jew as the helpless catalyst, if not butt, of the joke. The primary victims of Clovis' ruse are the clownish Huddles, while Clovis' mockery is reserved for the church; yet two local Jews are also lured into Clovis' trap. The Huddles cannot deny their complicity, but Sir Leon Birberry and Mr. Paul Isaacs cannot escape their exposed Jewishness. The nobleman and parish councillor are, perhaps, chosen by Clovis because they hold high social positions, and

Clovis usually makes fools of aristocrats and local politicians. While Munro may have come to sympathize with Jews as outsider figures in Europe, Saki tends to lump them in with the elite, the complacent money-makers and respectable gentlemen who need to be brought down a peg or two. But Birberry and Isaacs are still Jews first and foremost, and are treated as such, for Clovis needs two prominent Jews of the neighbourhood to trick all concerned into believing his elaborate "Unrest-cure." Yet ultimately, in Saki's anti-religious attack, his main target is Christianity, and he wryly uses an anti-Jewish plot to expose the historical hypocrisy and complicity of the church in their own selectively anti-religious campaign to stigmatize and kill Jews.[114]

WHEN MUNRO-SAKI CAME BACK TO ANTI-SEMITISM

If the secondary Jewish victims are necessary to the plot of Saki's pointed satire in "The Unrest-Cure," though, Saki soon relapses into using Jews as easy fodder for cheap shots. Perhaps Saki's conflicted stance on Jews is, at least in part, a reflection of mixed feelings about them in Munro's social milieu:

> It would probably be true to say that a Jew could never command full acceptance. There was a hollow ring to the concept 'Jewish gentleman', and it is noticeable that society figures usually pointed out the racial antecedents of even close friends when they departed from the Anglo-Saxon norm. . . .
>
> Explicit anti-semitism was unusual; but there were still severe restrictions on the acceptance of Jews by public schools and for careers in the Army . . . Some clubs had an explicit bar on Jewish members and the main question that social arbiters had to deal with was how far to tolerate those Jews (or individuals of Jewish ancestry) who aspired to follow the gentlemanly life-style.
>
> On this question Edwardian high society divided. On the one hand there was a strain of explicit anti-semitism to be found . . .

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[114] It is possible that, in part, Saki satirizes anti-Semitism because Munro, unconsciously, realized that anti-Semitism and anti-gay sentiments were often linked; both Jews and homosexuals were and are often bestialized, feared because of their ability to pass in the general population, and connected with uncontrolled lust, monetary or sexual. Of course, the prejudices were most obviously and explosively melded in the Nazis' Holocaust. See Bruehl-Young 440-45.

> On the other hand, there was a growing readiness to accept Jews socially, which would have been unthinkable some fifty years before. (Middlemas 56-57)

Possibly influenced by the anti-Semitic rumours surrounding the so-called "Marconi scandal" in 1912, Saki expresses a growing suspicion of British Jewry. In "A Touch of Realism," a Christmas history-charades game ends with Vera Durmot and Cyril Skatterly leaving the Klammersteins (associated with shadowy wealth when Saki writes that the prize for the game would, "coming from a Klammerstein source . . . certainly run to several guineas" [303]) on Slogberry Moor to fulfill their roles as Ferdinand and Isabella deporting the Jews (306). In "Cousin Teresa" (*MP*, March 11, 1913), Saki connects Jewishness with music-hall acts, a link he would return to in *When William Came* and which was possibly influenced by Wilde's beastly stage manager in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Lucas Harrowcluff, a bumbling failure who will soon find fame with a quirky, novel musical act, is described as imitatively Hebraic: "There was certainly no Semitic blood in Lucas's parentage, but his appearance contrived to convey at least a suggestion of Jewish extraction. Clovis Sangrail, who knew most of his associates by sight, said it was undoubtedly a case of protective mimicry" (307). In "The Almanack," Clovis builds an elaborate lie around an imaginary, planned Balkan revolution financed "'by some Rumanian Jew'" ("Six Uncollected Stories . . ." 297). In "A Holiday Task," Saki casually mentions "a satirical-looking Jew" (340) in a hotel lobby, while in "The Philanthropist and the Happy Cat," he tells of a young man who "was aware, of course, of his good looks, but with the shy self-consciousness of the Anglo-Saxon, not the blatant complacency of the Latin or Semite" (384).

It is the "blatant complacency" of the English on which Saki focusses bitterly and relentlessly in his 1913 pre-war novel *When William Came*, which renounces Saki's dandy character and expresses some vicious anti-Jewish feeling. Munro was a fervent supporter of any conflict that Britain might join, telling a friend, "'I have always looked forward to the romance of a European war'" (Reynolds xxi-xxii); his desire to fight, and die if need be, in the Great War was so strong that Munro enlisted at the age of forty-three and refused a commission. A year earlier, with war seeming imminent, there was certainly no place any longer for a more nuanced, understanding approach to the Jewish question in Saki's work; the Jew, along with Munro-Saki's now-despised, unpatriotic non-man, so scorned in "An Old Love" (see Chapter 1), is the enemy within and a sign of England's weakness. Perhaps, too, Saki abandons his conflicted distillations of Munro's experience with Jews because he feels, as Eric Homberger notes, that "Ambivalence is an undignified attitude, betraying indecision and regret in equal proportions" (165). *When William Came* is an utter rejection of the reporter Munro's softening attitude towards Jews and of Saki's ironic satire of anti-Semitism in "The Unrest-Cure." In contrast with that story, in particular, and other examples of Saki's rebellious literary streak, the novel is a pathetically conventional book,

> at least in part an expression, in an extreme form, of moods of the time: anxiety and fear of the future and rage at the passing of an English dream of glory and stability. The values that the book propose[s] as good are essentially those of du Maurier, Childers, and Lord Roberts—Duty, Self-Sacrifice, The Empire, The English Earth (Hynes 51).

When William Came blames complacent Englishmen for not taking the German threat seriously and exhorts the younger generation to rise up and defend their nation. Saki no longer displaces and problematizes the pro-Britain, anti-Semitic voice of Munro, but disavows nearly all the ironic, ambiguous stances of his earlier fiction and embraces a nationalist fervour that includes diatribes against "cosmopolitan Jews." In addition to dismissing the dandies of his earlier stories, Munro-Saki glorifies the countryside setting he so often undermined in his stories, joining many of his literary peers in, as Jonathan Rutherford puts it, rediscovering "rural England as a symbol of the country's unchanging essence. . . . the village and the countryside [represent] reassurance and continuity" (51-52).[115] Murrey Yeovil, disgusted by the German occupation, retreats to East Wessex and decides, Huddle-like, but this time endorsed by the narrator, on "settling down into this life of rustic littleness" (801). In London, in the final chapter of the novel, Munro-Saki completes the betrayal of his earlier satires by earnestly using the Boy Scouts — those guardians of the forthcoming Jewish massacre in "The Unrest-Cure" — as the last best hope for England's young generation to rise up and defy their Teutonic conquerors.

Yet the nation has not been invaded by Germans alone. If the countryside is still British, the city has been taken over by cosmopolitan Jews. Langguth suggests that for "Munro, who had traveled through Europe enjoying the pleasures of boulevard life . . . back in London . . . what he had learned for himself about the Jews in Russia is blurred once more by the prevailing English attitudes" (229). Early in the novel, a doctor explains to Yeovil that, of those Jews who have not

> "remained British . . . the men who by temperament and everything else were far more Teuton or Polish or Latin than they were British, it was not to be expected that they would be heartbroken because London had suddenly lost its place among the political capitals of the world, and became a cosmopolitan city. . . . [London] has taken on some of the aspects of a No-Man's-Land, and the Jew, if he likes, may almost consider himself as of the dominant race; at any rate he is ubiquitous. Pleasure, of the café and cabaret and boulevard kind, the sort of thing that gave Berlin the aspect of the gayest capital in Europe within the last decade, that is the

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[115] Saki's suggestion that the heart of Britishness can be found in the (male-dominated, middle-class) countryside is emphasized by his protagonist's last name, "Yeovil," obviously deriving from the word yeoman, referring to "a man holding and cultivating a small landed estate" ("Yeoman," def. 1); in keeping with Saki's call to arms, a "yeoman" also harked back to the then-recent time when men served in the yeomanry, "a volunteer cavalry force raised from the yeoman class (1794-1908)" ("Yeomanry," def. 2).

> insidious leaven that will help to denationalize London. . . . London will become more and more the centre of what these people understand by life." (710-11)

In a book that constantly posits England as civilized and all other nations or peoples as barbaric, Murrey Yeovil merely reacts with sympathetic "impatience and disgust" (711) to the doctor's totalizing analysis of the Jewish problem. Non-British Jews (however such people can be categorized) are a ubiquitous but distinctly foreign and cosmopolitan race, "mysteriously different" (Parkes 68) and dangerously strange, whose understanding of "'life'" is most certainly not English. This diatribe is modern anti-Semitism of the basest kind, propped up by the meaningless racial and physiological categorizations so common at the time; Munro-Saki feels that London should be somehow racially pure, an Anglo-Saxon stronghold, and these pleasure-loving Jews have diluted that with their "cosmopolitanism," in other words, their nomadism and restlessness. Although British Jews are still Jews first and foremost, they are deemed loyal to England, while these cosmopolitan Jews in London — presumably recent immigrants from the Continent in the wake of Germany's occupation — are unwanted outsiders, an alien presence. As Gillen remarks, such a rant is all the more remarkable for its structural awkwardness and narrative purposelessness:

> The emergence of Munro's anti-Semitism here, a typical Tory attitude of that day, has the appearance of his having seized an opportunity to air one of his prejudices. It certainly does nothing to amplify his theme of the necessity for military preparation in England.
>
> Another thread in this book, and one that is the more surprising because of Munro's wide-ranging travels and his prolonged residences abroad, is his condemnation of the growing cosmopolitanism that he detected in influential artistic and political circles in England. (121)

Later in the novel, in the music hall, Jews are "prodigal of word and gesture, with eyes that seemed to miss nothing and acknowledge nothing, and a general restless dread of not being seen and noticed" (737). Here is the Jew as both empty vessel and voluble attention-getter, the sybarite and unknowable enemy all in one, a shadowy cipher. And so, after instances of wariness and distrust in his early fiction, Munro-Saki ends his chapter on the Jewish figure in his writing by utterly rejecting the complex, self-reflexive examination of Saki's lessening anti-Semitism in "The Unrest-Cure" and embracing a nearly hysterical, xenophobic anti-Semitism, all in the name of manly, patriotic, martial "Britishness."

Munro's displacement of his anxiety about effeminacy and/or non-masculinity onto the easily scapegoated figure of the Jew was echoed in Rupert Brooke's anti-Semitism, for whom, with "its association of female emancipation and homosexuality, Bloomsbury became the 'pseudo-Jews'; the symbol of dirt, decay and transgression" (Rutherford 59). The military manliness which Munro-Saki craves is "an ordered, patriarchal world" (60) and, like Brooke, he turns his male anxiety into a rejection of and hatred for the dandy and the New Woman, projecting this newfound, twisted self-animosity "into the imaginary bodies of Jews and intellectual young women who refused to accept their place and compounded his own insecurities. . . . 'Manliness is the one hope of the world,' [Brooke] told Virginia Woolf" (60). Both anti-effeminacy (for lack of a better word to connote a prejudice that encompasses male homophobia, heterosexism, machismo, and patriarchal attitudes) and anti-Semitism can be, "in certain periods" — of which the aggressively masculine, gender-"separated spheres," imperialist eras of Victorian and Edwardian England must surely be considered one — "manifestations of the same prejudice syndrome" (Bruehl-Young 440). The sad irony of Munro-Saki's projected anti-Semitism — which, in Dollimore's terms, tracks back on itself and only reveals, through its very expression, the even greater self-anxiety it attempts to erase — is that "the fate of the Jews and gay people [or men perceived as effeminate] has been almost identical throughout European history, from early Christian hostility to extermination in concentration camps" (Boswell 15). In aligning himself with anti-Semitism, Munro-Saki is trying to simply rid himself of his self-perceived taint of non-masculinity; by marking out the Other, he could purge the Self. The difficulty, however, was that there were two selves which could never be easily reconciled.

While Munro and Saki frequently subscribed to the anti-Jewish sentiments of their time, Saki's stories often champion the English outsider who undermines authority figures with pranks, lies, ruses, and violence. Saki could never clearly see Jews as outsiders or underdogs; briefly, in the uneasily subversive "The Unrest-Cure," Munro's increasingly sympathetic observations of persecuted Jewish communities in Warsaw and St. Petersburg as a reporter seem to complicate Saki's portrayal of Jews, but the dominant values of the time, particularly as war approached, influenced the blurring Munro-Saki to the extent that passages in *When William Came* are wantonly, viciously prejudiced, reflecting "Munro's anti-Semitism, the nearly universal anti-Semitism of his caste" (Gillen 121). Certainly, while Munro's European reports for the *Morning Post* sometimes exhibited more nuance and sympathy in its writing about Jews than one might expect to read in a conservative paper, the call-to-arms *When William Came* is a startling about-face after Saki's ironic use of anti-Semitism in his 1911 story, and the novel offers plenty of ammunition to a critic such as Hynes, who see Saki as a Tory reactionary: "London and its society have been left to foreigners, Jews, and social climbers—representatives of that 'Cosmopolitanism' which for Saki, and so many conservatives like him, was the antithesis of English values" (51). "The Unrest-Cure" provides a fascinating but all-too-brief example of what could have been had Saki the author, led by the experiences of Munro the journalist, been brave enough to break with dominant Edwardian values and satirize prevailing attitudes towards Jews, rather than reconfirm them. Instead, aside from one remarkable story, Saki remains an uneasy anti-Semite. While "The Unrest-Cure" notably stems a prevailing tide of anti-Semitism that washes through Munro's journalism and Saki's earlier stories, the prejudice resurfaced as war approached with Munro-Saki more viciously diverting the masculine anxiety of the Self into nationalist prejudice against an easily identifiable Other, and thus the militant screed *When William Came* rides a dark undertow of anti-cosmopolitanism and Jew-hatred.

Whereas Munro's, and Saki's, attitude towards the Jews was badly torn — an ambivalence greatly influenced by Munro's observations of anti-Semitic attitudes while a correspondent in Eastern Europe and Russia — Munro evinced a deep but seemingly simpler fascination with Slavic countries long before H. H. Munro the journalist or Saki the satirist emerged. Yet a careful reading of Saki's stories — in which a pseudo-"Orientalism" can be seen in the author-narrator's romanticization and simplification of Slavic Europeans — reveals that, while Saki's attitude towards Eastern Europe and its peoples is often simpler and more stereotypical than his vacillating portrayals of Jews, Saki also implicitly undercuts, complicates, and questions his own and Munro's essentializing and "exoticizing" of the backwards, mysterious Slav. Yet Saki's subversion of stereotypes cannot ultimately dismantle the basic framework of Orientalist language and settings in his portraits of Slavic Europe.

The best example of Saki's conflicting messages regarding the "East" in his stories is "Cross Currents" (which was first published in *The Westminster Gazette* on September 18, 1909 but may have been written during Munro's time as a correspondent in eastern Europe), yet another take on his dichotomous theme of natural wildness vs. urban mundanity. In the story, Alaric Clyde loves the married Vanessa Pennington, "but his heart was caught in the spell of the Wilderness" (84). Saki, only partly flippant, depicts the distinctly non-English world of a vague Eurasia as the man's mythic playground:

> In the high waste places of the world Clyde roamed and hunted and dreamed, death-dealing and gracious as some god of Hellas, moving with his horses and servants and four-footed camp followers from one dwelling ground to another, a welcome guest among wild primitive village folk and nomads, a friend and slayer of the fleet, shy beasts around him. By the shores of misty upland lakes he shot the wild fowl that had winged their way to him across half the old world; beyond Bokhara he watched the wild Aryan horsemen at their gambols; watched, too, in some dim-lit tea-house one of those beautiful uncouth dances that one can never wholly forget; or, making a wide cast down to the valley of the Tigris, swam and rolled in its snow-cooled racing waters. (85)

Clyde's Eastern travels are contrasted with Vanessa's tedious routine back in London. When her husband dies, however, and Vanessa takes up with Clyde, their wandering lifestyle disagrees with the spoiled city woman, whose xenophobia is sardonically revealed: "Vanessa was well enough educated to know that all dusky-skinned people take human life as unconcernedly as Bayswater folk taking singing lessons" (86). Here Saki, as in most of his stories concerning Slavic Europe, unfavourably compares the foreign land to England, but also mocks well-educated Anglocentric assumptions and preconceptions, as well as making fun of the blinkered Clyde, who studies Central Asian game-birds and Gobi fauna. Yet the reductive, romanticized portrayal of such foreign lands, however flippantly or ironically sketched, remains the narrative framework, the preconceived template, to which the narrator and reader both initially subscribe. Such an exoticized backdrop often persists; for instance, later in "Cross Currents," Vanessa and her newest lover are kidnapped by "Kurdish brigands" (88), who remain broadly drawn villains in a generically awful setting because they and their land are meant to humorously and unfavourably contrast with Vanessa's well-mannered, "modern" background:

> To be mewed up in a squalid Kurdish village in close companionship with a man who was only your husband by adoption, and to have the attention of all Europe drawn to your plight, was about the least respectable thing that could happen. (88)

It is not until they reach the quay of a "little Black Sea Port [that] the rescued pair came once more into contact with civilization" (89). The author-narrator is being somewhat facetious here and ironically presenting Vanessa's view of where "civilization" begins and ends, but the story's cartoonish depiction of an exotic Eastern playpen for an English explorer also plays along with Eurocentric notions of "civilization" and the Orient as a safari land, a place for adventures. "Cross Currents" epitomizes the sometimes subversive, self-aware attitude of Saki towards simple categorizations of the East, but the story also shows the ultimate triumph of an essentializing, simplistic, romantic overview of the East that nuanced, ironic lines within the story cannot eclipse. When the journalist Munro returned to London to eventually begin writing for a living, he would cast his preconceived, limited version of Slavic Europe — his personal "Orient" — in a romantic, obscuring light that Saki's satiric voice could never fully snuff out; indeed, Munro and Saki would sometimes burnish anew the abiding myth of a primitive, enchanting, Byzantine quasi-Europe that stretched from the Balkans to Moscow.

Although Munro returned to England from Burma in 1894, he eventually turned to Russia, a country that he had never visited, as a subject.[116] "Hector H. Munro" authored *The Rise of the Russian Empire*, published in 1900 after Munro had moved to London in 1896 "to earn his living by writing" ("Biography" 673). Munro's book was a "history of European Russia from the middle of the ninth century to 1619" (Gillen 28). The literary influences on or personal reasons (apart from his noted love of wild spaces) for Munro's Russophilia are unknown. Neither Gillen nor Langguth offer any basis for Munro's interest in Russia, although Gillen presumes that Munro must have learned to read "Russian in the original . . . somewhere during his earlier life" (28) and Munro remarks in his August 4 letter to the *Morning Post* that "he speaks a little Russian" (see Appendix Four); in her biography, Ethel Munro briefly notes that her brother "spent much time in the British Museum Reading Room getting material for his book" (674) and that "Hector himself had not a great opinion" of the work (675). Despite the history's poor critical and commercial reception,[117] Munro continued to be drawn to Russia. He was assigned to St. Petersburg during his years as a European correspondent for the *Morning Post*, while Saki often alluded to Russia in his stories. Munro co-hosted (with A. Rothay Reynolds, a journalist he first met in St. Petersburg) a London reception for the Diaghilev ballet troupe in 1911 (Langguth 180-81).

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[116] Langguth states that Munro visited Pskoff, then on the western outskirts of Russia, as part of a largely cultural tour of Germany and eastern Europe with his father and Ethel in 1888 (31), but this seems to be a misreading of Ethel's entry about the trip: "Nuremburg delighted Hector—then and always he loved old towns; *in later days* Pskoff more than fulfilled his dream of what a mediæval town should be" (655; my emphasis). According to Thrane (see below), Munro's piece on Pskoff was first published in 1905.

[117] See Gillen 29, 31-34, wherein Gillen remarks on the book's frequent purple prose, its presumably unpopular belittlement of religion, and various reviewers' criticisms of Munro's archaic transliterations. See Langguth 54-55 for examples of "Hector H. Munro's" florid style and criticisms of religion. *The Rise of the Russian Empire* was priced at a steep ten shillings and sixpence (55), and unfavourable reviews by such journals as the *Athenæum* — to which Munro responded (56) — probably also hurt sales of the volume.

Munro's Russophilia is particularly striking given Britain's general lack of interest, alternating with outright antipathy and distrust at times, in the country of the Tsars in the nineteenth century. On the political front, "Russia emerged dramatically as a full European partner during the Napoleonic Wars, was felt increasingly by England as a rival, had become the enemy by the time of the Crimean War, and during the late 1870s and beyond appeared to threaten British interests at every point of natural conflict from Greece and Turkey to India, Afghanistan, and the Far East" (Waddington viii). With Russia's wintry rout of Napoleon in 1812, the British feared a potentially immense rival empire and "Russophobia became the cornerstone of international alignments" (19), although a sort of cultural "Russomania" lingered in London as a counter-current for some years after the French defeat (20). Some of the most famous and widely read Victorian poets reflected common anti-Russian sentiments, exacerbated by the 1853-56 Crimean War, Russia's expansion into central Asia (threatening British India), and the anti-Jewish pogroms that began in the 1880s. Tennyson (whose *The Charge of the Light Brigade* commemorated the senseless deaths of British soldiers in a monumental blunder during the Crimean War) claimed in 1878 that "'I've hated Russia ever since I was born, and I'll hate her till I die'" (60), while Swinburne's condemnation of the "pre-Revolutionary Tsars" (222) and "professed animosity towards . . . Russia" may have been a reason why he was not appointed as Tennyson's successor to the exalted post of poet laureate (217).

According to K. W. B. Middleton in *Britain and Russia: An Historical Essay*, by the time of Edwardian Britain and Munro's history, and before the relaxation of diplomatic tensions with the 1907 Anglo-Russian Convention, only a "few politicians, a journalist here and there, might be found to express mildly pro-Russian opinions" (93). An entry for Russia in a 1906 illustrated encyclopedia, "*The World of To-day*," reads in part that the country "'is a devouring empire', 'the bugbear of neighbouring nations,' built up by 'patient and unscrupulous diplomacy, where not by force', her alarming bulk fortunately 'weighted by debt and weakened by poverty of mind and body' . . . [and its fiction is] 'full of gloom, of ugly realistic features, and often with vulgar crime as the main interest'" (93).

Munro presumably cobbled together his own history from similarly lurid accounts and fanciful generalizations about a country which he had not yet seen and only imagined; thus the book became a saga-like survey of others' stories and anecdotes about the "Russian Empire." Langguth observes: "throughout his book ran a bright romantic thread, less descriptive of Russia than of Russia as Hector wanted it to be" (53). For instance, Langguth quotes the amateur historian's description of the imagination of Russia's slaves, which Munro writes

> gave deific being to the sun, moon, stars, wind, water, fire, and air, but most of all they reverenced the lightning. In their dark, overshadowed forest homes it was natural that the sun, which exercised such mystic sway in the blazing lands of the Orient, should yield place to the swift, dread light which could split great trees with its spasm of destruction and shake the heavens with its attendant thunder. (53-54)

In writing his history of an unseen land in the heart of the British Empire, Munro was prejudging, creating, and colonizing Russia in his own imagination. Munro's book, then, is a quintessential example of Edward Said's "Orientalism," as outlined in the book of the same name, whereby to "have such knowledge of such a thing is to dominate it, to have authority over it. And authority here means for 'us' to deny autonomy to 'it'—the Oriental country—since we know it and it exists, in a sense, *as* we know it" (32). Munro ends his history in 1619 as though Russia's great days as an empire are behind it; such countries' "great moments were in the past; they are useful in the modern world only because the powerful and up-to-date empires have effectively brought them out of the wretchedness of their decline and turned them into rehabilitated residents of productive colonies" (34-35). While Russia was trying to build an empire of its own, it was naturally inferior to, and infinitely stranger than, the British Empire.

The Rise of the Russian Empire presages not only Munro's abiding fascination with Slavic countries and Saki's setting of stories in Eastern Europe, but the authorial persona's desire to exoticize and mystify Munro's own experiences of the Balkans and Russia from 1902 to 1906. Even in a contemporaneous review of *The Rise of the Russian Empire*, Munro's insistence on romanticizing Russia was criticized. Professor Archibald Carey Coolidge, in the October 1901 issue of *The American Historical Review*, wrote that a great fault of Munro's history lay in the author having

> fallen, and fallen helplessly, into the commonest of all mistakes in dealing with all things Russian, that of regarding them as abnormal. . . . he is continually trying to impress us with the strangeness of his theme. . . . nothing is ever natural, it is all lurid or grotesque or both. . . . (Gillen 34)

Carey notes that Munro's book establishes a key theme in Saki's literature: "Its subject might seem a million miles from the Saki stories, but it derives its thrills, just as they do, from the perpetual clash between savagery and civilization. An imaginative historian, Hector revels in the atrocities of old Russia" (Carey xv).

Munro's attitude towards Russia may be best discerned in "The Old Town of Pskoff," a travelogue clearly written by Munro, not Saki, that was included in the posthumous 1924 collection *The Square Egg*, a grouping of miscellaneous, undated writings (according to Thrane [140], the piece originally appeared as a *Morning Post* article on July 27, 1905). The account begins in a rather grand, historical manner:

> Russia at the present crisis of its history not unnaturally suggests to the foreign mind a land pervaded with discontent and disorder and weighed down with depression, and it is certainly difficult to point to any quarter of the Imperial dominions from which troubles of one sort or another are not reported. . . . Perhaps there are few spots in European Russia where one so thoroughly feels that one has passed into a new and unfamiliar atmosphere as the old town of Pskoff . . . To the average modern Russian a desire to visit Pskoff is an inexplicable mental freak . . . an aversion to beaten tracks and localities where inspection is invited and industriously catered for turns one towards the old Great Russian border town, which probably gives as accurate a picture as can be obtained of a mediæval Russian burgh, untouched by Mongol influence, and only slightly affected by Byzantine-imported culture. (*The Penguin Complete Saki* 556-57)

Munro's fascination with Russia is always an outsider's fascination, whereby Russia or parts of it are "unfamiliar," freakish, and enchantingly foreign. To Munro, Pskoff still has some of the purity of grand medieval Russia, untainted by the East. Detailing the faraway place but always at a tantalizing remove, Munro's descriptions remain vague, alternating between views of the "little town" as a place of backwards, "ample charm" and Pskoff as an exotic and ultimately unknowable place, "quaint and fantastic in architecture" (557). "Strings of primitively fashioned carts" (558) can be seen, a bridge is "primitively planted on piles" and a mast is "topped with gilded wooden pennons figured somewhat like a child's rattle," while "in the town one sees on all sides quaint old doorways" (557). Condescending classifications and ethnocentric generalizations vie with one another in Munro's descriptions, as a "stalwart peasant . . . [carries] a small wooden plough, with iron-tipped shares, that must date back to some stage of agriculture that the West has long left behind" and the "cathedral, on closer inspection, is a charming specimen of genuine old Russian architecture" (558). "Quaint little booths line the sides of some of the steeper streets," where "earthenware pottery of strange local patterns are set out for sale" (558). Yet what "is strangest of all," Munro writes, is

> to find a human population in complete picturesque harmony with its rich old-world setting. . . . streets and wharves and market-place glow with wonderfully effective groupings of colour. . . . Nature competing with Percy Anderson [a London theatre costume designer] was the frivolous comment that came to one's mind, and certainly a mediæval crowd could scarcely have been more effectively staged. (557-58)

Clearly, Munro wants to see Pskoff and its citizens as the dramatic backdrop for a re-enactment of a medieval Russian town, the present-day simulation of Munro's pre-conceived Russian past. Discovering and half-explaining the town for his English readers, Munro never talks to any of its inhabitants (via a translator or personally), preferring to paint his pretty postcard of a pseudo-medieval backwater: "The heart knoweth its own bitterness, and maybe the Pskoffskie, amid their seeming contentment and self-absorption, have their own hungerings for a new and happier era of national life. But the stranger does not ask to see so far; he is thankful to have found a picturesque and apparently well-contented corner of a weary land" (558). In his revealing use of "seeming" and "apparently," Munro unconsciously realizes that these statements, like all his descriptions, are biased, Anglocentric conjectures about a "land" whose citizens he appears not to have solicited opinions from or even interacted with; Munro is happy to merely scope out and imaginatively exploit "the old town of Pskoff" for his intrigued, self-satisfied readers.

In Saki's fiction, Russia and the Balkans would serve as the Orient. As Drake notes in a 1962 article, "in his work the East plays the same exotic role as the dark, attractively sinister forces of the supernatural, the 'wild,' the 'childish'--in short, whatever is antithetical to the ordered, 'rational,' 'adult,' 'Western' world" (7). Yet Saki often slips into the easy, common traps of labelling the East as not just impish, but simple, and not just wild, but primitive; as Said notes:

> The Oriental is irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, 'different'; thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature, 'normal.' . . . Knowledge of the Orient, because generated out of strength, in a sense *creates* the Orient, the Oriental, and his world. In Cromer's and Balfour's language the Oriental is depicted as something one judges . . . something one studies and depicts . . . something one disciplines . . . something one illustrates . . . The point is that in each of these cases the Oriental is *contained* and *represented* by dominating frameworks . . . (40)

Long before travelling to Pskoff and St. Petersburg, Munro took it upon himself to educate English readers on a bygone Russian Empire as he imagined it from his studies in the British Museum Reading Room. If Munro's views on Jews were largely shaped by his time in Eastern Europe as a foreign correspondent, Munro's notions of Russia, and to a lesser extent other Slavic nations, had been largely formed in those years when he was compiling his historical survey in London, and Munro the reporter's experiences of the Balkans and St. Petersburg would often be fitted into "Hector H. Munro" the dilettante historian's pre-cast mould. Saki's allusions to Russia in his fiction reveal a strong clash between the abiding trend for exotic, "Orientalizing" stereotypes and the author's cross-current of satire, which often undercuts simple categorization and washes away a romanticized narrative with a stinging chaser of wit or absurdity.

"Reginald in Russia," which Langguth conjectures that Saki penned in the spring of 1909 (158), is the title story of Saki's second collection, published in 1910. The

Reginald sketch is the only one in the volume and consists of a conversation between Reginald and his host, Olga, a Russian Princess. Her bedraggled appearance, in garb not as cultured or refined as an English lady's dress, is associated with the country's rural backwardness: "He classified the Princess with that distinct type of woman that looks as if it habitually went out to feed hens in the rain" (43). The Princess is the first to compare the essential ethnic characters of the English to the Russians, but she does so by playing into the stereotype of the dour, bleak Russian soul: "'In Russia we have too many troubles to permit of our being light-hearted'" (45). The Princess does not prove her assertion that "'Nothing that you hear about us in England is true'" when she continues with an attack on her government as corrupt and without democratic elections, resulting in a system where "'the people are exploited and plundered in every direction, and everything is mismanaged'" (45). Reginald sarcastically suggests that an elected government simply has less time in which to be venal and dissolute: "'With us . . . a Cabinet usually gets the credit of being depraved and worthless beyond the bounds of human conception by the time it has been in office about four years'" (45). Thus England remains more sophisticated, even in its deplorable governments. The Princess continues to paint herself and her people in broad strokes: "'here it is dreadful, every one goes to such extremes' . . . 'There is always a see-saw with us between repression and violence'" (45). Yet the "'us'" who vacillate between such extremes is also a "'people . . . really not in the least inclined to be anything but peaceable,'" the Princess says, although her evidence of this comes in the vague forms of her fellow citizens' "'good-natured'" manners and "'family circles [full of] affection'" (45). Reginald's riposte to this again comes in the form of a velvet-tongued slap at Russians' relative lack of sophistication and culture, mocking a Russian lad as a heartless grandchild and foolish card-player:

> 'I know a boy who . . . plays bridge well, even for a Russian, which is saying much. I don't think he has any other accomplishments, but his family affection is really of a very high order. When his maternal grandmother died he didn't go as far as to give up bridge altogether but he declared on nothing but black suits for the next three months' . . . (45)

When the Princess, unimpressed by Reginald's wry remarks, suggests that his self-indulgence will only lead to unhappiness, Reginald responds that "'Forbidden fizz is often the sweetest'" (46) and Saki the author-narrator champions the Englishman's epigram, asserting that "the remark was wasted on the Princess" (46). Her half-hearted invitation to her country estate is silently rebuffed by the resolutely urban Reginald. There is a slender line between an Englishman's urbane wit and ethnocentric dismissiveness in the Reginald stories; as with the "suburb of Jerusalem" comment in "Reginald at the Theatre," the dandy's cool quips in "Reginald in Russia" easily slip into cold, patronizing negations and stereotypical reductions of real Russian life and people.

"The Bag" relies on the picture of a Russian as dull-witted, far less civilized than the English, and decidedly foreign and unknowable. Mrs. Hoopington, wife of Major Pallaby, who is the Master of the Pexdale Hounds, thinks little of "'that stupid Russian [hunting] boy'" who "'can't ride'," while her niece condescendingly defends him as "'amusing'" (77). Vladimir's great flaw, apparently, is his ignorance of the proper game; he included a woodpecker among his quarry recently. When the nineteen-year-old returns with a full game-bag, including a large brown creature, Norah pales in fear. If a foreigner has shot a fox before her uncle and his fellow gentlemen hunters have, the Major will be furious. But she cannot clearly explain this to Vladimir, who speaks poor English, before her aunt and uncle come in for tea. Although she and Vladimir skirt around the issue, the game-bag is spotted, sniffed at by the fox-terrier, the distraught Major resigns his post, and the unconcerned Russian plays with a cigarette and recalls "the youth in the old Russian folk-tale who shot an enchanted bird with dramatic results" (79-80). Finally, Vladimir gets rid of the bag's despised contents and "in the dusk of a November evening the Russian boy, murmuring a few of the prayers of his Church for luck, gave hasty but decent burial to a large polecat under the lilac trees" (80). Saki's concluding twist of the narrative knife cuts two ways; although the Russian is cleared of any offence and the English family's bigoted assumption is punished, Vladimir is still reviled by his hosts, left in the dark as to his crime, and generally remains the comic stereotype on which the farce of misunderstanding and social impropriety depends.

It is not unusual that Russia, in a Saki story, would be associated with or even eclipsed by an animal, given Saki's preoccupation with fauna.[118] In "Bertie's Christmas Eve" (*WG*, December 23, 1911), guest Horace Bordenby tells the Steffink family that he has "'read that the peasants [in Russia] believe that if you go into a cow-house or stable at midnight on Christmas Eve you will hear the animals talk. They're supposed to have the gift of speech at that one moment of the year'" (437). When the group goes into the farm-building that has been left to stand on the suburban property, the delinquent Bertie takes the opportunity to lock them all inside. Saki's story, moving from an association with Russia as pagan and rural to the trapping of English suburbanites like farm animals, ends with a sly turn that reveals a general British ignorance of things Russian:

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[118] From Munro's and Saki's Wilde-inspired fables ("The Image of the Lost Soul" and "The Saint and the Goblin") and the 1899 story "Dogged" to Saki's apparently final story, "For The Duration of the War" — noted as "Written at the Front" (*The Penguin Complete Saki* 532) — Munro's and Saki's canon of completed *stories* (excluding Saki's political satires) numbers, by my count, 138. Of these, 38 contain animal protagonists (or animals as catalysts or focuses of the plot, as in "The Bag") and 20 stories' titles involve a reference to an animal or an animal's name (e.g. "The Boar-Pig," "The Stalled Ox"). Saki's stories, usually set in the countryside or the wild, also contain hundreds of allusions to animals and many minor appearances by various species.

> "Hullo," cried [Bertie, tipsy] . . . "are you people still there? Must have heard everything cows got to say by this time. If you haven't, no use waiting. After all, it's a Russian legend, and Russian Chrismush Eve not due for 'nother fortnight. Better come out . . . " (440-41)

In "The She-Wolf," the first story in the 1914 collection *Beasts and Super-Beasts*, a trick by Clovis punctures the false ego of Leonard Bilsiter, an attention-seeking occultist who, after a trip "across Eastern Europe" (235), paints Asiatic Russia, east of Perm, as a place of "certain dark mysteries" and "Siberian magic" (235). Clovis obtains a relatively tame wolf and, with the collusion of Mrs. Hampton, baffles and shows up Leonard by making it appear that he has turned their hostess into a she-wolf. Clovis then takes full credit for the metamorphosis, lying:

> "you see, I happen to have lived for a couple of years in North-Eastern Russia, and I have more than a tourist's acquaintance with the magic craft of that region. One does not care to speak about these strange powers, but once in a way, when one hears a lot of nonsense being talked about them, one is tempted to show what Siberian magic can accomplish in the hands of some one who really understands it. I yielded to that temptation. May I have some brandy? the effort has left me rather faint." (241)

Along with further exoticizing and mystifying Eastern Russia, Clovis the trickster assumes that an Englishman can truly understand and practise "Siberian magic." The cultural arrogance of Clovis is not so different from Munro's encapsulation of centuries of Russian life and culture in an historical narrative. The simple notion of Siberia as a great, pseudo-European (and thus defamiliarized enough to be exotic yet still within imaginative reach) wilderness, as suggested in "The She-Wolf," seemed to cast a spell over Saki and Munro. In *When William Came*, Murrey Yeovil returns home to German-occupied England after an extensive trip "'in the wilds of Eastern Siberia, shooting and bird collecting, miles away from a railway or telegraph line, . . . and everything was over and finished with before he got back to civilization and newspapers'" (694).[119] Three years later, Lance-Sergeant Munro anticipated leaving England after the war and ensconcing himself in remote Siberia, in "'some out-of-the-way spot'" far from "'civilization'" (694). Munro's sister recalls:

> He . . . was discussing his project of going out to Siberia when the war was over, with a friend and having a little farm there.
>
> "I could never settle down again to the tameness of London life," he told me. (705)

Rothay Reynolds recalls:

> But the spiritual change wrought in him by the war was greater than the physical. He told me that he could never come back to the old life in London. And he wrote asking me to find out from a person in Russia whether it would be possible to acquire land in Siberia to till and to hunt, and whether a couple of Yakutsk lads could be got as servants. It was the love of the woodlands and the wild things in them, that he had felt as a child, returning. The dross had been burnt up in the flame of war. (xxvi-xxvii)

Clearly, Munro idealized the isolation and wild expanse of Siberia in contrast with the tame, confining London bourgeois life that Saki so often mocks in his stories. Indeed, much of Munro's and Saki's romanticizing of Russia and eastern Europe is not "imperialist exoticism [that] affirms the hegemony of modern civilization over less developed, savage territories," but "exoticizing exoticism [that] privileges those very territories and their peoples, figuring them as a possible refuge from an overbearing modernity" (Bongie 17). Yet by stereotyping Russians according to conventional English assumptions of the time, even after Munro's experience of St. Petersburg, Saki was taming Russia while still keeping it at a safe but intriguingly exotic distance for the superior-feeling British reader. Russians and Russian culture remain naïve, uncivilized, and just strange enough to be the catalysts for confusion or ridicule in a story, never posing any threat or alternative to Reginald or Clovis and their merry, bold England.

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[119] In "The Holy War," included in an appendix to Langguth's biography and first published in *MP* on May 6, 1913, Revil Yealmton (note the name's similarity to "Murrey Yeovil"; Saki began writing *When William Came* in the first half of 1913) returns to the "English West Country" from "nearly two years of profitable business pilgrimage in the border regions of Asiatic Russia" ("Six Uncollected Stories . . ." 287).

BALKAN STATES

Although the region rarely appears in a Reginald or Clovis tale, beyond the invading Jews, the wilds of Eurasia, and the Russian steppes, the most prominent "Orient" in Saki's canon is that part of Slavic Europe long regarded as a dark, chaotic corner of the continent, the Balkans. From the autumn of 1902 to March 1904 (when he moved to Warsaw), Munro reported from such towns and cities as Salonica, Rustchuk, Uskub (now Skopje), Monastir, Belgrade, and Sofia for the *Morning Post*. The Balkans, seen by many as a quasi-Oriental anomaly in Europe, had already long been considered a dark, mysterious place that was lagging behind the rest of the continent. Harry De Windt, a reporter stationed in the Balkans only a few years before Munro, penned a 1900 travelogue entitled *Through Savage Europe: Being the Narrative of a Journey (Undertaken as Special Correspondent of the "Westminster Gazette"), Throughout the Balkan States and European Russia*. De Windt spatializes his prejudices, explaining the aptness of his title on the first page:

> "Why 'savage' Europe?" asked a friend who recently witnessed my departure from Charing Cross for the Near East.
>
> "Because," I replied, "the term accurately describes the wild and lawless countries between the Adriatic and Black Seas."
>
> For some mystic reason, however, most Englishmen are less familiar with the geography of the Balkan States than with that of Darkest Africa. This was my case, and I had therefore yet to learn that these same Balkans can boast of cities which are miniature replicas of London and Paris. But these are civilised centres. The remoter districts are, as of yore, hotbeds of outlawry and brigandage, where you must travel with a revolver in each pocket and your life in your hand, and of

> this fact, as the reader will see, we had tangible and unpleasant proof before the end of the journey. Moreover, do not the now palatial capitals of Servia and Bulgaria occasionally startle the outer world with political crimes of mediæval barbarity? (15-16)

Such prejudice, prejudgement, and mystifying ignorance masked as objective "geography" is, in part, the "mystic reason" why De Windt's countryfolk knew just as little about the Balkans as they did about similarly strange, "Darkest Africa." Balkan cities, only recently evolved from their barbaric past, are compared unfavourably to their European counterparts, while the rest of the land, the "remoter districts," remain strange and primitive. The "lawless" Balkans are a sort of European "Wild East"; little wonder, then, how De Windt ends his account: "But Buda Pest was eventually reached in safety, and here, once more within the commonplace but comfortable realms of civilisation, my wanderings 'Through Savage Europe' are at an end" (300).

De Windt's book, in the general sense of "Orientalism" as Said uses it, clearly fits into those "pervasive patterns of representation of cultures and societies that privilege a self-confidently 'progressive,' 'modern' and 'rational' Europe over the putatively 'stagnant,' 'backward,' 'traditional' and 'mystical' societies of the Orient" (Bakić-Hayden and Hayden 1). Such marginalization and exoticization of the Balkans, Russia, and other European countries near Asia remain common.[120]

Even critics of Saki resort to generalizations about the people of the Balkans; Gillen, in his 1969 book, depicts the Balkans circa 1904 as a premodern place full of beastly humans: "these credulous primitives of eastern Europe suggested the use of a dark corner of literature—eerie, supernatural themes and incidents" (65). The biographer thinks that "the savagery and bestiality [Munro] witnessed in the Balkans and Russia had a direct effect upon him afterward," for witnessing such sub-human behaviour hardened him to such an extent that "the strange heartlessness and impassivity toward human suffering which appears to be very much like cruelty [in Saki's writing], was deepened by these years of the foreign correspondent experience" (65).[121] Gillen also writes of "moody Slavs" (64), notes "the ignorant, superstitious, and often illiterate natives of the region being observed and reported on by the urbane and enlightened young man who went to live among them" (50), and argues:

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[120] For instance, nearly a half-century after De Windt's account, in a footnote to a chapter on "Russia and England in Asia" in a 1944 history of Russia-England relations, the author notes: "Throughout this book, in defiance of recent fashion, I use 'Near East' to denote Turkey in Europe and Asia" (Marriott 101).

> The years Munro spent in the Balkans and in Russia enabled him to slake his thirst for the exotic. He appreciated this primitive corner of Europe with its backward life and its wild and often ruggedly beautiful landscapes for its rarity in the most cultivated and civilized of continents. The flavor of Graustark and Ruritania so evident in his fiction is authentic enough; he had lived in such an atmosphere. In this regard A. A. Milne has described the rather intimidating impression Munro made upon the other writers of fiction who contributed to the London press fifty-odd years ago [quoting from Milne's introduction to *The Chronicles of Clovis*, New York: Viking, 1927]: 'A strange, exotic creature, this Saki. . . . For we were so domestic, he so terrifyingly cosmopolitan.' (64-65)

So, with his exoticizing tales of the Balkans, the foreign-named Saki — taken from a text that, in "Edward FitzGerald's rendering of *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* . . . needed no overt moralizing to stress the contrast between enlightened, progressive west and benighted, nonprogressive east" (Brantlinger 143) — himself became a fascinatingly strange creature.

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[121] As this section of the chapter strives to show, Munro's reaction to the Balkans was, in fact, more ambivalent than might be expected. For instance, while "the murder and defenestration of Alexander and Draga in Belgrade [was] a regicide particularly distasteful to royalists in Austria-Hungary and Great Britain" (Tedorova 118), Munro's initial report on the killings for the *Morning Post* (June 13, 1903) moves beyond the dispassionate to the flippant:

> The issue was a domestic one, and lay between the Servian people and the Servian ruling family. . . .
>
> "It was dreadful, was it not?" a Servian will ask you half-anxiously when going over the pitiful details.
>
> And you can truthfully make answer, "It was intensely dramatic."

Yet Munro, British Empire born and bred, cannot hide his dismay at the lack of publicly displayed sorrow for the slain monarchs or interest in their successors: "I had seen a King-choosing . . . and it had not come up to expectation" (*MP*, June 20, 1903; see also Langguth 109).

While such "balkanism" (Tedorova 3), unlike Orientalism, concerns "a discourse about an imputed ambiguity" and "transitionary character" rather than opposition (17), nonetheless, to a limited degree (particularly prior to the Balkan wars and World War I, which is when Tedorova argues "balkanism" was crystallized [19]), as Bakić-Hayden and Hayden note, the general mentality of "Orientalism can be applied within Europe itself, between Europe 'proper' and those parts of the continent that were under Ottoman (hence Oriental) rule[122] . . . There is little doubt that the Balkans, either Byzantine or Ottoman, represented a cultural and religious 'Other' to Europe 'proper'" (3).[123] If the racial Other of Africa seems more familiar to the fin-de-siècle Briton than the Balkans, as De Windt notes, such ignorance only reveals a European hierarchical "symbolic geography" based on religion, poverty, and development (and perhaps presumed work ethic and other stereotypes), Bakić-Hayden and Hayden argue, wherein countries "may be seen . . . as declining in relative value from the north-west (highest value) to the south-east (lowest value). . . . there exists a tendency for each region to view cultures and religions to the south and east of it as more conservative and primitive" (4). At the bottom of this sliding scale lies the Balkans. In fact, as Goldsworthy summarizes, in "an imagined map of

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[122] Orientalism also applies to (pre- and post-Soviet) Russia, as most of Russia was long under Mongol rule and most of the nation's territory is considered, geographically, to be part of Asia; recall, too, Hector H. Munro's own words in *The Rise of the Russian Empire*: "the blazing lands of the Orient" (qtd. in Langguth 53-54).

[123] Vesna Goldsworthy's argument differs in degree, arguing more finely that "perceptions of Balkan identity [move] in an ambivalent oscillation between 'Europeanness' and 'Oriental difference'" (*Inventing Ruritania* 2). See also Maria Tedorova's argument, in which she asserts that "balkanism" (3) is different from "Orientalism" because of the "historical and geographical concreteness of the Balkans as opposed to the intangible nature of the Orient" (11; although it is still a little murky as to which peoples and countries constitute the Balkans, as Tedorova herself notes on 31), the different sort of "Orientalism" that Ottoman rule involved (12), and the lack of the "self-perception of being colonial" in the Balkans (17).

Europe defined in this way, 'Britishness' and 'Balkanness' stand at opposing ends of the hierarchical diagonal" (*Inventing Ruritania* 9).

In late 1902, when Munro followed this diagonal and arrived in the peninsula, the main Balkan question concerning Europe was whether to parcel up or authorize the independence of Macedonia, a region of some three million Slavic people that imperial Turkey and Bulgarian rebels were fighting over (Langguth 86-87). Since 1876, though, the Balkans region had increasingly concerned Europe. Then the "Eastern Question" had taken "another precipitous turn" when revolt in Bosnia-Herzegovina led to a souring of England-Russia relations (Bongie 81). 30,000 to 100,000 Bulgarian civilians were killed (Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania* 28) when "[r]evolt spreads to Bulgaria, where it is brutally crushed by bands of Turkish irregulars [*bashi-bazouks*]; these 'Bulgarian Horrors' provoke an almost unprecedented outcry among the British public" (Bongie 81). In addition, a "month before the Turkish atrocities . . . the French and German consuls in Salonica are murdered by a Muslim mob. . . . Eager to placate the wrath of the Great Powers, Turkish authorities promptly have the guilty parties executed" (81). Gladstone pled on behalf of the Bulgarians, while Disraeli sided with the Turks in order to oppose the growing empire of pro-Slav and pro-Bulgarian Russia. The "Eastern Question" produced

> Dozens of pamphlets . . . between 1875 and 1877 [which] testify to the exceptionally far-reaching character of this debate, which, perhaps with only the precedent of the news of the Greek uprising in the 1820s, first brought the intricacies of the Balkan situation into the drawing-rooms and parlours of Britain. The crisis nurtured an exceptional generation of journalists and foreign correspondents who together pioneered the techniques of popular newspaper coverage of a foreign policy issue. . . . The idea of a vast, but rather amorphous, sea of Christians ruled by the Turks (Serbs, Bulgarians and Romanians – on account of their religion had been regularly referred to as Greeks) was, in the 1870s, being replaced by more sharply focused national Balkan stereotypes. . . .

> 'Suffering' Bulgarians, 'wild' Albanians, 'martial' Servians and 'proud, brave' Montenegrins, were beginning to appear in the pages of *Punch*. If the awareness of the different Balkan nationalities was new, the adjectives used to describe them continued to be essentially Romantic. (Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania* 30-31)

How could such a mentality about the Balkans, established and reinforced by newspaper writers for thirty years, not influence Munro's reporting in 1902-04? Munro only studied historical texts (some of dubious scholarship, no doubt) and Oriental authorities before writing his romantic *The Rise of the Russian Empire*, and such supposedly authoritative texts often only confirm, circumscribe, constantly perpetuate, and reproduce stereotypes for and in their readers (Said 93-94). Books like Hector H. Munro's 1900 work and those histories he read in the British Museum created an Orientalism that "overrode the Orient" and such preconceived truths, continually reconfirmed, were often put to political use (96). Munro's time in the Balkans — "a part of the world that had always attracted him," Ethel claimed in her memoir (677) — was likely just as influenced by rosy, narrow-minded books such as De Windt's as Munro's Russian experiences were biased by his own imaginative history and other Orientalizing Russian tracts he perused as an amateur historian in London. Indeed, only a few months into his stint in the Balkans, Mnuro wrote to his sister that Uskub was "the most delightfully outlandish and primitive place I have ever dared to hope for. Rustchuk was elegant and up-to-date in comparison" (677-78).[124]

Little wonder, then, that once in the Balkans the reporter Munro — expressing his personal views or, more likely, that of his reportorial persona, "the opinion of a personality that he found it congenial to adopt" (Carey xvii) — began to report in the same sort of exoticizing style that he perfected by the time he penned "The Old Town of

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[124] Munro's attitude seems to have been derived, at least in part, from the "bourgeois" attitude towards the Balkans, as Tedorova outlines: "It was an entirely nineteenth-century phenomenon, based on enlightened linear evolutionary thinking and dichotomies like progressive-reactionary, advanced-backward, industrialized-agricultural, urban-rural, rational-irrational, historic-nonhistoric, and so on" (109).

Pskoff." As in De Windt's book, Munro's articles either unfavourably compare an aspect of Balkan life to the English social standard, or depict Slavs as aberrantly different from and thus grossly inferior to the English. In a January 23, 1903 *MP* article, for instance, he writes that, in the Bulgarian legislature (the Sobranje), "In leisurely fashion the members drift into their places, some clad on an irreproachable Westminster model, many in a primitive and uncompromising garb" (Gillen 50). Over a year later, in a Belgrade dispatch published on February 23, 1904, Munro describes the Lent fast, snootily remarking that

> judging from what one sees as one rides through the arable uplands the task of the husbandman is not lightened by the employment of anything modern and improved . . . In the cafés and restaurants of Belgrade the billiard tables are decorously swathed in their night-covers, cards and dominoes are banished, and even the placid joys of chess are discountenanced . . . (Gillen 53)

Soon after, in a piece that appeared in the *Morning Post* on March 3, describing the celebration in Belgrade of the centenary of the Serbian War of Independence, Munro emphasizes the people's laziness and apathy. He writes of the general "languid enthusiasm which Belgrade displays on occasions of national festival," the many public holidays during the Orthodox New Year, the monotonous appearance of many Serbian flags, which could be turned upside down to become the Russian standard, and describes celebrants who "walked complacently up and down the principal streets, which are not altogether paved with a view to pleasurable promenading." Munro notes that the scene pales in comparison to "the West End on the night of the King's birthday" and judges the nocturnal tradition of commemorating the event by putting candles in windows to be "not impressive" in the larger buildings. A May 7, 1904 report from Warsaw, published three days later, also emphasizes the "terrible monotony" of a "name-day" celebration in the then-Russian city.

Munro's reports were first-person and carried an air of "flippancy" and "detached calm" (Langguth 87) that permeated not only his descriptions of places and people, but also his accounts of the ethnic and political clashes of the time. In an October 1902 story the fledgling reporter shows "no trace of sympathy for the Bulgarian bands that were fighting for independence from Turkey" (89). Langguth feels that Munro was pro-empire and anti-Slav: "Clearly, [he] sided with those officials who claimed that if the Turks would only fight the Bulgarians with government troops instead of the irregulars . . . the struggle would be brief" (89). In a March 4, 1903 article, Munro stated where the fault for this particular Balkan problem lay: "the disturbing factor in the region may be sought and found in the Bulgar-Macedonian," who organized in cabals and took over the most important jobs in Macedonia (92-93). According to Munro, the Turks were trying to insitutute political changes and any "fantastic idea that evil comes from above, having its origin in official oppression . . . does not require very elaborate refutation" (93). The *Morning Post*'s "special correspondent" in the region evidently felt, Langguth notes, that Bulgaria should cease its "expansionist aims" (93). En route from Uskub to Salonica, Munro and others slipped out of a railway station where they would have been delayed in their travels and narrowly escaped being shot by Turkish captors, who instead tied them up and brought them back to the station (Langguth 96-98; also in Ethel Munro's biography). This experience did not seem to sway his pro-Turk stance. Indeed, the *Morning Post* printed a reader's complaint about Munro's bias against the Serbs and his low opinion of the Serbian population of Macedonia, to which the reporter briefly responded in the May 15, 1903 issue of the paper (101). While Munro half hoped for war in a successive dispatch (May 22, 1903; Langguth 102), he also realized that the Slavs would turn to Russia, Britain's foe, for support. Soon, Langguth argues, Munro begins to show increasing disaffection with the way the Turks are waging war (103), but he still does not "portray vividly the poverty" in Macedonia or the atrocities of war (104). In a June 2, 1903 article, Munro proposes a solution to the conflict — dividing up the region into ethnic provinces, to be governed over by a local authority with police, judicial, and civil powers, which would only be answerable to a central government (106). But just over a year later, after returning to England for a time, then coming back to the Balkans and moving on to Warsaw, a piece by Munro concerning the repression of a May Day protest in the Russia-controlled ~~city~~ appeared in the *Morning Post* on May 5, 1904. In it, Munro abandons his more detached, wry tone and expresses sympathy for and even a sort of solidarity with the beaten protestors:

> here in Warsaw the people were not throwing bombs and blowing up public buildings; they were not even throwing stones and smashing windows. . . . The majority, perhaps, had never left the sidewalk. They were simply indulging in a silent demonstration against a Government which certainly does not labour to endear itself with the people. . . .
>
> If these things were done in some Turkish province it would be correct to indulge in rhetoric about 'the sands running out.' (Gillen 57)

After his time in Russia, witnessing the police's repression of the crowd in St. Petersburg on Bloody Sunday and at other protests, Munro seems to have tempered his opposition to popular uprisings and ethnic groups' quests for self-determination. Langguth observes that, by January 1906, "As in Macedonia, the heavy-handed official response to civil disorder, combined now with the pain of having watched a boy murdered, was driving [Munro] from his instinctive support for the government" (142). Munro, who had once favoured Turkish rule in Macedonia and often seemed to side with the powers-that-be in his dispatches, made a remarkable about-face (though one still based on a notion of ethnic — in this case Slavic — politics, rather than self-determination) by October 1908:

> When Bulgaria at last declared its countrymen in Macedonia independent of Turkey, [Munro] sent an unexpected endorsement to the *Westminster Gazette*, which had been supporting that cause while [Munro] was still praising the restraint of Turkish beys. He had come around to a simple truth: 'The Macedonian of Bulgar blood will prefer to prosper in a progressive Bulgaria rather than in a reformed Turkey.' (Langguth 154; qtd. from *WG*, October 12, 1908)

With that intriguing reversal of opinion, Munro the journalist's conflicted fascination with the Balkans, from his frequent simplifications about its people and his wavering position on Turkish or Russian authorities' use of force in Macedonia and Warsaw, came to an end.

Yet by 1908, the short-story writer Saki's no less ambivalent preoccupation with the Balkans was well under way. While earlier stories such as "Wratislav" or "The Soul of Laploshka" merely offer characters with Slavic names, other tales clearly tap into Munro's time in Macedonia and Serbia. "The Lost Sanjak," written circa 1909, is an atypical Saki story, a dark mystery-adventure in the vein of Arthur Conan Doyle (whose 1899 story "B.24" has a similar conceit; the reference to "Baker Street" in Saki's story may be a nod to Doyle's more famous mysteries), with the retrospective narration of an Ambrose Bierce tale. A condemned man reviews his capture to the prison chaplain, relating how he turned his back on the local doctor's wife with whom he was smitten and switched clothes with a dead man he came across on the roadside, in the hope of starting a new life. Yet he was assumed to be the man's murderer, and soon the accused found that he could not exonerate himself because he lacked any distinctive knowledge that could assert his true identity. In his moment of crisis, the prisoner is unable to recall the French he was supposed to know,

> "And then . . . came the final discomfiture. In our village we had a modest little debating club, and I remembered having promised, chiefly, I suppose, to please and impress the doctor's wife, to give a sketchy kind of lecture on the Balkan Crisis. I had relied on being able to get up my facts from one or two standard works, and the back-numbers of certain periodicals. The prosecution had made a careful note of the circumstance that the man whom I claimed to be—and actually was—had posed locally as some sort of second-hand authority on Balkan affairs, and, in the midst of a string of questions on indifferent topics, the examining counsel asked me with a diabolical suddenness if I could tell the Court the whereabouts of Novibazar. I felt the question to be a crucial one; something told me that the answer was St. Petersburg or Baker Street. I hesitated, looked helplessly round at the sea of tensely expectant faces, pulled myself together, and chose Baker Street. And then I knew everything was lost. The prosecution had no difficulty in demonstrating that an individual, even moderately versed in the affairs of the Near East, could never have so unceremoniously dislocated Novibazar from its accustomed corner of the map. It was an answer which the Salvation Army captain might conceivably have made—and I had made it." . . .
>
> When the Chaplain returned to his quarters, some fifteen minutes later, the black flag was floating over the prison tower. Breakfast was waiting for him in the dining-room, but he first passed into his library, and, taking up the *Times* Atlas, consulted a map of the Balkan Peninsula. "A thing like that," he observed, closing the volume with a snap, "might happen to any one." (53-54)

Thus the obscurity of a Balkan region condemns an unknown man to die for his mistaken identity. Saki chooses to make the "lost sanjak" (a Turkish word for an "administrative district") of Novibazar[125] the centrepiece of his story because of Munro's familiarity with the area and because of the word itself; the equivalent of asking someone today where "Timbuktu" or "Zanzibar" are, the area's "strange-sounding name [is] evocative of eastern bazaars" (Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania* 96). The name conjures up a place that probably remained somewhat hazy, though appealing, in the British cultural imagination at the time; indeed, the condemned man had only given a lecture on the

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[125] Usually transliterated as "Novi Pazar," this region northwest of Montenegro was occupied by Austria-Hungary from 1878 until 1908. The Ottoman Empire lost control of it after the First Balkan War of 1912 and it was divided between Serbia and Montenegro.

Balkans because he wished to impress the doctor's wife and others with his superficial knowledge of a fashionable topic. The two answers that flit into the tale-teller's mind in court are equally bizarre and thus equally likely; in fact, Novibazar is a long way from St. Petersburg, and the suggestion that "St. Petersburg" would have been a sufficient answer seems unnecessarily flip. Then there are the story's last lines, where Saki suggests that anyone might place Novibazar in London rather than where it belongs. Saki mocks British ignorance of Eastern European geography, but in the end "The Lost Sanjak" remains the centrepiece of the story, and the exotic-sounding name and marginalized location of Novibazar is the butt of the joke.

In "Filboid Studge, the Story of a Mouse That Helped" (*The Bystander*, December 7, 1910), Saki inserts, in a witty rumination on people who feel so duty-bound that they cannot comprehend an activity as a pleasure, a remark on sadism: "whenever a massacre of Armenians is reported from Asia Minor, every one assumes that it has been carried out 'under orders' from somewhere or another; no one seems to think that there are people who might *like* to kill their neighbours now and then" (159). Here is Saki the humorist darkly refracting Munro the journalist's observations of violence in the Balkans. Saki attacks those who are searching for scapegoats and administrations to blame; there are sadists and murderers who *want* to kill their kinsfolk, he reminds the naïve reader, though such killers do not exist in Saki's Britain.

Bloodlust in the form of terrorism is the hidden surprise in "The Easter Egg" (written circa 1910). Lady Barbara, a woman saddled with her cowardly son Lester, travels to "one of those small princedoms that make inconspicuous freckles on the map of Central Europe" (155) and is invited to the opening of a sanatorium which the Prince will attend. The scheduled events for the opening are either "fatuous and commonplace" or "quaint and charming" (155), while Lady Barbara ethnographically sizes up the physiognomy of one "sallow high-cheek-boned lady" as "probably Southern Slav" (155). This woman proposes that her child dress up as an Easter angel and carry a large egg up to the Prince, accompanied by Lady Barbara. This "wooden-faced child" and the difference between "such a tow-headed child" and "such a dark-visaged couple" (156) should make Lady Barbara suspicious; the robotic youngster and shadowy couple are Slavic terrorists, and the story anticipates the Black Hand and their assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand four years later. The egg is a bomb, and when the suddenly courageous Lester attempts to save the onlookers, it explodes, blinding Lady Barbara and killing her son. The suspicious, shadowy foreigners who were cowardly enough to unleash a child-bomber on a crowd are long gone, but their sinister portrayal lingers. Saki's association of terrorism with swarthy Southern Slavs in "The Easter Egg" leaves behind the sulphurous whiff of an ethnic slur.

Saki's most explicitly Balkan tales were both written around 1912, during the Balkan wars, and published posthumously in the 1919 collection *The Toys of Peace*. "The Purple of the Balkan Kings" focusses on Luitpold Wolkenstein, a minor financier and diplomat in Vienna who learns of the Turks' loss of Macedonia as he reads an article about the Serbs' seizure of Turkish fortress Kirk Kilisseh and the town of Kumanovo. While showing the influence of the foreign correspondent Munro and relating the geography of the area for his less knowledgeable English readers, Saki the narrator's disdain for the unadventurous, smug businessman is obvious:

> Never travelling farther eastward than the horsefair at Temesvar, never inviting personal risk in an encounter with anything more potentially desperate than a hare

> or partridge, he had constituted himself the critical appraiser and arbiter of the military and national prowess of the small countries that fringed the Dual Monarchy on its Danube border. And his judgment had been one of unsparing contempt for small-scale efforts, of unquestioning respect for the big battalions and full purses. Over the whole scene of the Balkan territories and their troubled histories had loomed the commanding magic of the words "the Great Powers" . . .
>
> Worshipping power and force and money-mastery as an elderly nerve-ridden woman might worship youthful physical energy, the comfortable, plump-bodied café-oracle had jested and gibed at the ambitions of the Balkan kinglets and their peoples . . . (526)

Saki's condemnation of this money-worshipping merchant and know-it-all amateur politico extends to Austrian-Hungarians, too, as he notes their "battery of strange lip-sounds" (526) employed when their "thoughts are not complimentary" (527). It may have been easy for a British readership to see the target of Saki's irony as the decaying Habsburg empire, but his satiric arrows fly farther afield. For Wolkenstein's cocky faith in the godlike power of the dominant European states' supreme skill at "dictating, adjusting, restoring, settling things once again in their allotted places" (527) is no different from a Frenchman's, German's, or Englishman's overweening certainty that their country will sweep up such minor "problems" as the Balkans. Munro the foreign correspondent had learned, by the end of his time there, how complex and messily human the Balkans, once a seemingly simple abstract problem to him, really were. The naïve Munro had once been like Wolkenstein and so many of his smug counterparts across Europe; Saki takes this experience and turns it into a warning:

> His world, his pompous, imposing, dictating world, had suddenly rolled up into narrower dimensions. The big purses and the big threats had been pushed unceremoniously on one side; a force that he could not fathom, could not comprehend, had made itself rudely felt. The august Caesars of Mammon and armament had looked down frowningly on the combat, and those about to die had not saluted, had no intention of saluting. A lesson was being imposed on unwilling learners, a lesson of respect for certain fundamental principles, and it was not the small struggling States who were being taught a lesson. (528)

Saki's other story written during the Balkan War, "The Cupboard of the Yesterdays," contrasts sharply with "The Purple of the Balkan Kings," showing Saki's deep ambivalence about the Balkans. While "The Purple of the Balkan Kings" uses a businessman (a figure usually vilified by Saki) to awaken naïve readers to the potency of Balkan states' anti-imperial, nationalist struggles, "The Cupboard of the Yesterdays" exhibits the Saki-esque strain of romanticizing supposedly off-the-beaten-path regions, picking up more seriously where "Cross Currents" humorously left off. A Merchant meditates on war's destruction of life and property but is cut short by a Wanderer, who ruminates extensively on "the tendency that modern war has to destroy and banish the very elements of picturesqueness and excitement that are its chief excuse and charm" (528). After the bursting of the European powers' hubristic bubble in the political "The Purple of the Balkan Kings," Saki falls back into a generalizing, dreamy picture of the Balkans as a remote, primal, sinister, and thrillingly strange wilderness. The Wanderer complains about how, post-war, the Balkans will be invaded by "civilized monotony," lamenting the loss of a region he reduces to a "happy hunting-ground for the adventurous, a playground for passions that are fast becoming atrophied" (529). The various Slavic peoples' struggles are forgotten; only the region's importance to the rest of Europe matters: "The Balkan lands are especially interesting to *us* in these rapidly moving days because they afford *us* the last remaining glimpse of a vanishing period of European history" (529; my emphasis). The Wanderer recalls his fanciful notions of the region as a child, but Saki never bothers to question these childish ideas; instead, he supports and perpetuates them through the Wanderer, as though Saki himself is recalling Munro's earlier, romantic notion of the Balkans before he travelled there and began to realize the intricacies and complexities of the peninsula's political and cultural situation. The Wanderer's breezy recollection of a long-winded Bulgarian who was suddenly murdered on the street one day is not ironic or undermined in any way by the author-narrator, and certainly not countered by the Merchant, who is given little space for his opposing views. The wistful nomad relentlessly maintains that the charm of the uncivilized Balkans will be lost once the region is parcelled out amongst Greeks, Turks, and Bulgars:

> ". . . the old atmosphere will have changed, the glamour will have gone; the dust of formality and bureaucratic neatness will slowly settle down over the time-honoured landmarks; the Sanjak of Novi Bazar, the Muersteg Agreement, the Komitadje bands, the Vilayet of Adrianople, all those familiar outlandish names and things and places, that we have known so long as part and parcel of the Balkan Question, will have passed away into the cupboard of yesterdays, as completely as the Hansa League and the wars of the Guises.
>
> They were the heritage that history handed down to us, spoiled and diminished no doubt, in comparison with yet earlier days that we never knew, but still something to thrill and enliven one little corner of our Continent, something to help us conjure up in our imagination the days when the Turk was thundering at the gates of Vienna." (531)

Here Saki paints the Balkans not as the "potentially virulent, threatening Other" (Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania* 13) but as a much-needed place of adventure, a heady tonic of wildness and primitiveness for the privileged, thrill-seeking explorer arriving from a more "civilized" part of the Continent. While others have depicted the Balkans as truly Byzantine, bound up in an arcane web of complicated, bizarre political entanglements, Saki keeps it simple here: the place is quite simply the last European frontier, a resort for the adventuresome and strange-seeking. The Balkans are reduced to a stage, its oddly named places "potential flashpoints which are . . . particularly attractive as fictional settings" (96). This is Saki's Balkans at their most exotically reduced, a "peninsula [that is] the last corner of Europe to preserve romance and excitement, precisely because of its wars" (117-18). Rather than delve into the politics and other specifics of the area, Saki keeps the "familiar outlandish" more outlandish than familiar — the "peninsula [remains] European and close by, and yet mysterious and intractable" (122) — while supporting the Wanderer's imperialist opinion. The Wanderer speaks of knowing the Balkans — even his childlike wonder at and interest in the area is asserted without question[126] — and talks only of its importance to "us," who hail from a privileged, civilized corner of Europe looking wistfully on as their own wild lands are tamed. The Wanderer's colonizing, "we know what's best" stance is the same attitude behind much of the Bulgars', Turks', and Greeks' efforts to parcel up and control the Balkans, but he fails to see this. As Said notes,

> As a cultural apparatus Orientalism is all aggression, activity, judgment, will-to-truth, and knowledge. The Orient existed for the West, or so it seemed to countless Orientalists, whose attitude to what they worked on was either paternalistic or candidly condescending—unless, of course, they were antiquarians, in which case the 'classical' Orient was a credit to *them* and not to the lamentable modern Orient. . . . (204-05)

For the Wanderer and Saki the endorsing narrator in "The Cupboard of the Yesterdays," the exotic, dangerous Balkans remain a credit to Europe, and this condescending attitude, utterly ignoring the Balkan people's wishes and struggles, is poles apart from the attack on European hubris and the outlining of Balkan political struggles in "The Purple of the Balkan Kings."

Far from Goldsworthy's contention, however, that the journalist Munro's (whom she confuses with Saki) "experience of Macedonia, Bulgaria and Serbia did not really filter through into his Balkan stories" ("Representations of the Balkans . . ." 262), Saki's ambivalence about the region is best described, by 1912, as a constant vacillation, swinging from a romantic, Oriental view of the Slavic peninsula to Balkan-set satires of romanticizing, Orientalizing Europeans. Saki's two stories written during the Balkan Wars epitomize a deep conflict between Munro's personas and sub-personas as they oscillate between romantic simplification and sly mockery of such rosy reductionism. Saki regresses to the pre-journalist views of Slavic Europe as held by *The Rise of the Russian Empire* author "Hector H. Munro" in such pieces as "The Old Town of Pskoff" and "The Cupboard of the Yesterdays," only to seemingly remember H. H. Munro's experiences as a reporter in the Balkans and channel that understanding into satire hurled back at the naïve, romanticizing Hector H. Munro and others like him.

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[126] As Goldsworthy notes, in Saki's "The Toys of Peace" (c. 1914), children play with a "'Siege of Adrianople' toy set" and are already familiar with the sides and participants, debating war strategy and stating orders in Bulgarian; thus Balkan incidents are "children's affairs" (*Inventing Ruritania* 122-23). In "The Oversight," a woman makes sure that two of her guests agree on all topics, only to have them quarrel because she overlooked one topic on which they proved to be at loggerheads: one was pro-Greek, while the other was pro-Bulgar. In this instance and in a few other minor scenes in the Saki canon, "English people involved with any aspect of the Balkans are all too easily, and often with comic consequences, prone to developing 'Balkan' passions" (125). Saki's play *The Death-Trap*, which Goldsworthy discusses briefly, is set in an imaginary Balkan state.

For after "The Cupboard of the Yesterdays," Saki turns back to ridiculing those who see the Balkans as a savage frontier and Byronic badlands (originally "created by the Romantics in their desire to escape the increasingly ordered world of industrialised Western Europe" [Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania* 210]), just as the Wanderer and Saki the narrator do in that story. "The Name-Day" (most likely written in late 1913 and perhaps inspired by Munro's May 7, 1904 report on name-day celebrations in Warsaw) sets up the reader's expectation of "a set of familiar stereotypes and perceptions" (210) about the Balkans, often bolstered by Saki himself in other stories, only to mock and undermine such an assumption. This is Saki at his most dependently dissident, backtracking on other representations of the peninsula and thus indirectly criticizing himself for relying on an Orientalist view of the region. John James Abbleway is the diametrical opposite of the Wanderer, a "retiring . . . [and] constitutionally timid" man

(366) who does not like the prospect of travelling in "strange lands where adventures were less easy to guard against than in the ordered atmosphere of an English country town" (367). But when Miss Penning, his English sweetheart, asks him to meet her and her brother in Fiume, Abbleway takes a holiday from his position in Vienna only to find himself, en route, in a train car uncoupled on snowbound tracks in the "heart of some Styrian or Croatian forest" (368). Abbleway, thinking that he and the peasant woman in the neighbouring compartment are the only humans for miles, grows anxious about wolves and starving to death, and he gesticulates and jabbers on in a smattering of various "Slavonic tongues" to his fellow passenger (369). The woman seems uninterested, although she confirms Abbleway's notion that wolves roam the area, for they killed her aunt nearby three years earlier; she is not worried, however, as it is the day of her saint, "'my name-day. She would not allow me to be eaten by wolves on her day. Such a thing could not be thought of. You, yes, but not me'" (369-70). She sells a blood-sausage to the panicking Abbleway, who soon sees "a gaunt prick-eared head, with gaping jaw and lolling tongue and gleaming teeth," then another, pop up outside the window (370). When the peasant decides to leave the car and head for a nearby house, Abbleway beseeches her not to leave, but the woman remains certain that she will not be harmed on her name-day. Abbleway looks out to see that the wolves are dogs jumping around her. They are her cousin's dogs, and she is heading over to her relative's inn, which she did not want to take Abbleway to because cousin Karl "'is always grasping with strangers'" (371). The shrewd businesswoman has not only fleeced Abbleway, but preyed on his, and the reader's, stereotypes about the Balkans as a wild, sinister, threatening place. Munro the reporter often emphasized Slavs' supposed superstitions and

religiosity, while Saki stresses Eastern Europe's wildness in stories such as "The Cupboard of the Yesterdays" and "The Interlopers" (in which long-feuding neighbours become trapped beneath a storm-felled tree in the Carpathians and resolve their differences, only to discover that wolves are approaching to devour them), but here Saki not only undermines these ideas, but he uses them to dupe the reader into believing the apparently simple peasant woman's story and thinking that Abbleway, stuck in this strange and savage land, will die. Romanticizing the Balkans, Saki warns in "The Name-Day," can lead to self-delusion and self-deception.

In "The Wolves of Cernogratz" (c. 1914), however, Saki returns to a romantic notion of Slavic Europe, regaling the reader with a legend about wolves howling when a member of the von Cernogratz family dies. Although the owners of the castle scoff when the lowly governess claims to be the last of the Cernogratzes, the elderly servant's lineage is confirmed when, as she expires, packs of lupine mourners howl outside.

In "Quail Seed" (*MP*, December 26, 1911), an artist and his sister appeal to human curiosity and customers' fascination with the exotic by pretending, along with a swarthy boy, to be Eastern patrons of a grocery store. The ruse attracts business, proving that preying on people's gullibility for romantic stereotypes and mysterious foreigners is a profitable enterprise. Saki's awareness of this, as one who sometimes peddles in such representations, is striking; as prone as amateur historian Hector H. Munro, quite often H. H. Munro the newspaper correspondent, and sometimes Saki, were to romanticizing a pseudo-Oriental version of Slavic Europe, Saki also often seems to recall the reporter Munro's experiences of everyday life in the Balkans and thus purposely undermine his own dependence on strange, exotic portraits of the Balkans in some cleverly twisting satires.

THE "OTHER" AND IMPERIAL MASCULINITY

John Carey remarks that "Hector's years as a journalist, like his tour of duty in Burma, fed his taste for wildness, and stored his mind with images that were to provide a constant resource, in his fiction, against the Mappin Terraces [see Chapter 4 for an explanation of this term] of the modern world" (xix). Yet Munro's gradual altering of opinion on ethnic conflicts and political protests — evolving from a conservative, pro-Turk stance to not only the moderate opinion that Macedonia should be parcelled up with international supervision and Macedonians of Bulgarian heritage might prefer to live in Bulgaria, but expressions of sympathy with beaten agitators in Warsaw and St. Petersburg — suggest an ongoing conflict between the martial- and adventure-minded, imperially masculine Munro and the Munro who, according to his sister, had a "softer, sympathetic side to him" little seen in his writings ("Biography" 714). The larger conflict, however, was between the masculinity-anxious Self of Munro and an Other, Saki, who often shows sympathy for the oppressed, downtrodden, or marginalized in his stories. These cross-currents seem to be channeled by Saki into ebb-and-flow shifts between romantic views of the Balkans as an authentically old, wild, quaint, and strange European frontier, and satires of just such convenient, generalizing notions about a region whose people and places were as rich, complex, and sophisticated as any other. Carey's remark on Munro's taste for wildness being whetted by his stint in Burma is instructive, for it is a Burmese tale (whose setting is likely inspired by Munro's time there as a policeman in 1893-94, but was probably written in 1912[127]) which is Saki’s final anthologized story, concluding the posthumous 1924 collection *The Square Egg*. “The Comments of Moung Ka” opens with a description of Moung Ka’s “cane-built house by the banks of the swiftly flowing Irrawaddy” but Saki quickly erases any romantic backdrop by metafictionally noting that the pacing bitterns, herons, and cattle egrets “were also distinctly decorative” (560). The first indication of Saki’s stance in the story, that of an attack on British politics from the margins of the empire, comes with Saki’s favourable comparison of the ruminating Moung Ka to his English counterpart: “in Burma it is possible to be a politician without ceasing to be a philosopher” (561). Moung Ka tells his two friends, Moung Thwa and Moung Shoogalay, of the Indian government’s recent annulment of the proposed partition of Bengal, noting that it is “‘a good thing to consider the wishes of a people’” (562). Moung Ka notes that, however, the English government is continuing with its “‘partition of Britain’” (562; see Footnote 127) without consulting its citizens, whom the Burmese man presumes would oppose the division. The government is going ahead, Moung Ka notes wryly, because “‘they are what is *called* a Democracy’” (563; my emphasis). Here are the colonized sniping back at their imperial masters, holding hypocritical Great Britain to task for being a democracy in name only, ignoring the people’s will domestically while conducting Indian affairs otherwise. There are, obviously, flaws in Saki’s amusing logic here, not least of which is that, to make a just comparison, the wishes of the people of Ireland should be considered, as in Bengal, and not the wishes of all Britons. The main thrust of his satire, however, is startlingly progressive, as Saki circles around the notion of ethnic self-determination using the voices of the colonially marginalized. This is not the supposedly starry-eyed Munro or Saki who promotes exotic stereotypes of wild lands, but a more thoughtful, sympathetic, and bitter satirist who is trying to see the imperial dynamic from the side of the oppressed, colonized, and powerless.

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[127] “The Comments of Moung Ka” begins in a more florid, descriptive style, more typical of the Hector H. Munro who penned *The Rise of the Russian Empire*, but there are also many sharp, short Saki-esque lines of wit and irony. Given the mention of the revoking of Bengal partition, which occurred in 1911, and an exaggerated reference to what is likely the Irish Home Rule Bill, introduced in 1912, the tale was probably written around 1912 and is a thinly veiled attack on Asquith’s minority Liberal government.

Ultimately, though, despite his unsettling satire, spasms of self-criticism, and frequent sidestepping of simple categorizations, Saki never breaks free of the confining, conventional frameworks of anti-Semitism and Slavic Orientalism. A brief, savage, dependent dissidence can be seen in "The Unrest-Cure," where the usually stark anti-Semitism in Saki's short fiction briefly becomes more ironic, ambiguous, and dissident anti-Semitism that turns on its purveyor and audience, darkly satirizing anti-Jewish feelings in the English bourgeois world of Hector Hugh Munro. As A. J. Langguth notes, Munro's journalistic experience with Jews and Slavs, as evidenced by his reports for the *Morning Post*, led to a wary respect mixed with a pernicious association of Jews with crafty mercantilism, but by the time he settled in London to pursue fiction full-time "he had not resolved his ambiguity" about them (124). Munro the reporter found frequent confirmations of his rosy, pseudo-Oriental view of Slavs — begun with his amateur history of a medieval Russian empire — in his Balkan and Russian travels, and he commonly subscribed to "balkanism," whereby, "geographically inextricable from Europe, yet culturally constructed as 'the other' within, the Balkans have been able to absorb conveniently a number of externalized political, ideological, and cultural frustrations stemming from tensions and contradictions inherent to the regions and societies outside the Balkans" (Tedorova 188). The failure of Munro and Saki to fully subvert and overturn their anti-Jewish sentiments and Slavic romanticizing is typical of a dissidence dependent on an Edwardian society that perpetuated anti-Semitism and a wild, exciting picture of barbaric south-east Europe; Munro's and Saki's rebellions were only temporary because they could never entirely break with the world that produced such views.

A Munro-co-opted Saki falls back on widely-held prejudices as war approaches because Munro eagerly embraced a xenophobic, imperial English masculinity in order to quash any lingering self-doubts about his manliness. The poet Rupert Brooke, whose "intense sexual confusion and subsequent breakdown transformed his early enthusiasm for decadence and liberal tolerance into an anti-semitism and an outspoken misogyny," died "in 1915 at the age of 27, aboard a troopship bound for Gallipoli" and, ironically, his posthumous legend "as 'a young Apollo, golden-haired' became a homoerotic and nostalgic motif of England and Englishness during the interwar years and beyond" (Rutherford 8). Brooke's "anti-semitism was a projection of his own fractured identity, his own wandering aimless life" (59); Saki, reflecting the tension between an alienated, outsider man's kinship for other minorities and the metamorphosis of the Self's masculine anxieties into conventional prejudices against visible Others, struggles between expressing sympathy for the Jews and Slavs whom Munro met as a correspondent, and mocking them as non-British, unsympathetic, inferior peoples.

Saki's fascinatingly dissident attempts to subvert Jewish, Russian, and Balkan stereotypes, through sardonic inversion of anti-Semitism in "The Unrest-Cure" or ironic twists that reveal Britons' ignorance in a story such as "The Bag" or "The Name-Day," briefly destabilize fundamental anti-Jewish prejudices or exotic notions of Slavic peoples.

But, as Jonathan Dollimore notes, "dissidence may . . . actually [be] produced by [the dominant]" (26), and Saki's fiction is so influenced and sometimes overcome by dominant values, even as he tries to escape or rebel against them that, from *The Rise of the Russian Empire* to his descriptions of Jews and Slavs in his newspaper reports, Munro revealed his dependence on the sort of romantic, essentializing, or degrading stereotypes of Jews and Slavs that were current at the time. Munro's occasionally complex, ambivalent, or progressive accounts of the Balkan political situation and Saki's few dissident, ironic stories cannot topple the overarching, "Othering" frameworks that Munro and Saki (born in the pages of an Oriental poem) maintain in their generalizing, dehumanizing, or mystifying portraits of Jews, Slavs, Russia, and the Balkans. Rarely as fully human or supremely civilized as the oft-derided, eccentric English in Saki's work, Jews and Slavs tend to remain in a world apart, slightly subhuman figures to be mocked, misunderstood, romanticized, and often discarded in Saki's Anglocentric satirical universe, distorted images that are nowhere better captured than in a brief but telling conversation between Cicely and Murrey Yeovil:

> . . . "Ronnie Storre is coming in; he's here pretty often these days. A rather good-looking young animal with something midway between talent and genius in the piano-playing line."
>
> "Not long-haired and Semitic or Tcheque or anything of that sort, I suppose?" asked Yeovil.
>
> Cicely laughed at the vision of Ronnie conjured up by her husband's words.
>
> "No, beautifully groomed and clipped and Anglo-Saxon. I expect you'll like him. . . ." (*When William Came*, 714)

Chapter 4

"'THE OUTCOME OF MY IMAGINATION'"
Saki's Metafiction and Self-Metamorphosis

Now I have done my work. It will endure,
I trust . . .
. . . The day will come, I know,
So let it come, that day which has no power
Save over my body, to end my span of life
Whatever it may be. Still, part of me,
The better part, immortal, will be borne
Above the stars; my name will be remembered
. . .
I shall be read, and through all centuries,
If prophecies of bards are ever truthful,
I shall be living, always.
— Ovid, Epilogue to *Metamorphoses* (transl. Rolfe Humphries)

But on the whole, the examples of literary metamorphosis with which I have been concerned were not generated from a happy source. . . . This is not to say that they always convey pathological states of mind; but they do express involuted, frequently defiant attitudes that come as a protest in defeat . . . Even when it expresses a positive choice, it is a choice between difficult alternatives: usually a desperate choice.
— Irving Massey, *The Gaping Pig: Literature and Metamorphosis* (1976)

Next moment he was standing erect on the rock again, with that smile on his face and a drum beating within him. It was saying, "To die will be an awfully big adventure."
— J. M. Barrie, *Peter and Wendy* (1911)

Saki's ambivalences and contradictions yawn into a chasm of confusion with the Munro-Saki writings of *When William Came* and "An Old Love," which are utter reversals, denials, and reactionary resolutions of Saki's questioning of the non-heterosexually masculine and his uneasy attitudes towards women, Jews, and Slavs. Yet Saki's fiction is replete with metamorphoses and surprises: humans turn into animals, children outsmart adults, and tales end with dark twists. Saki's attitude to himself and his work is curiously ambivalent, for in his clever references to favourite themes and his use of other alter-ego writer figures in his fiction, he simultaneously prioritizes and mocks the authority of the author-narrator. There are also glimpses, throughout Saki's fiction, including in Saki's apparently last story, "For The Duration of the War," of a metafictional, slyly selves-parodying, sub-Saki who subtly satirizes and re-examines Saki's usual thematic preoccupations and the poem from which his name sprang, at times doing so conservatively, at other times subversively; such self-reflexive writing simultaneously evades and demands analysis, pointing out the construction of Saki's writing and calling attention to its foundations and craftsmanship. Ultimately, Saki shows the author to be business-minded and vain, and his art as subordinate to nature and the real world; Munro-Saki, increasingly eager to use the sword rather than the pen, employ writing mainly as an exhortation to defend the Empire. But in 1914, yet another cross-current challenges the apparently ultimate, awkward merger of dead Edwardian gentleman Munro and never-living author-narrator Saki. A late story, "The East Wing," written after *When William Came* and around the same time as "An Old Love," illustrates that the tone, voice, and style of Saki's fiction can artfully metamorphose and even question itself, sustaining the author-narrator persona with a dynamism that can be experienced in a way that the life of Munro can never be. "The East Wing" reveals that its own lines are, as Sonnet 18 expresses the Shakespeare who cannot otherwise be known, what "gives life to thee." Saki remains, ultimately, not an author-narrator persona who wrote stories, but a persona shaped and voiced by his stories for as long as he is, and they are, read. Like Eva in "The East Wing," Saki, who remains distinct, even in his contradictions and ambivalences, from Munro and Munro-Saki, was never really alive, and so he can never die.

SAKI'S *RUBÁIYÁT*

From his beginnings in 1900, Saki evinces a sly, metafictional interest in the origins of his name with a lingering preoccupation with the poem which gave rise to Munro's *nom de plume*.[128] Saki's ironic, self-referential, and inter-textual uses of *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* are sometimes playful and sometimes self-parodic, but always, ultimately, recall, through a metaliterary hall of mirrors, and reinvigorate the wild, energetic, and self-sustaining voice of Saki. Only five pieces after the first appearance of the name "Saki" in print, as the author of "Alice in Downing Street" (*WG*, July 25, 1900; one of those five pieces, "The Blood-Feud of Toad Water," was signed by Munro and likely written pre-Saki), "The Quatrains of Uttar Al Ghibe (with explanatory and conjectural notes)" appeared in *The Westminster Gazette* on March 4, 1901, with its sequel appearing fifteen days later.

Both poems are accompanied by illustrations by Francis Carruthers Gould (who had brought Munro/Saki and his idea of the Alice-in-Wonderland political verse satires to the attention of the paper's editor, J. A. Spender) and both are signed "SAKI," though this time "exigencies of printing did not permit the diacritical marks [as they had appeared in the FitzGerald translation of *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*, i.e., 'Sákí'] that he had carefully used in his notebooks" (Langguth 63). These two pieces may be Saki's birthplace, as Langguth notes:

> it may well be that the first parodies he had taken to Carruthers Gould had been based on the Rubaiyat and signed with a pen name drawn from their source. The

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[128] Ethel Munro writes in her memoir that her brother "loved Persian poetry and Eastern stories; Flecker's 'The Golden Journey to Samarkand' was an especial favourite" (695). Frost notes brief references to Arabian Nights in Saki's fiction in "Quail Seed," "The Occasional Garden," and *The Unbearable Bassington* (*Saki: His Context and Development* 163).

> two pieces that appeared may have been those samples, emended to bring them up to date. (63)

Saki's verse satirizes political events of his day (as with the Alice pieces), and so not only do they take the quatrain form of the *Rubáiyát* from which he took his pen name, but Saki turns the original names connected with the poem into self-reflexive puns that suggest the purpose and subjects of his satire. Omar Khayyám becomes "Uttar Al Ghibe" ("utter a jibe," i.e. mock) and "some authorities are inclined to think," Saki informs his readers, that Al Ghibe hailed from "El S'where, under the Sessyl Dynasty" (Robert Arthur Talbot Gascoyne-Cecil, better known as Lord Salisbury, held his third tenure as Prime Minister from June 1895 to July 1902). Thus Saki makes his inter-textual, self-referential link between the Persian poet and the Edwardian verse-satirist who pens the verse that follows; the minor character, a cup-bearer in the original poem, is now the storyteller and poet himself. Saki dryly remarks in one of the explanatory notes, "Although for the most part couched in a mystical phraseology which somewhat obscures their meaning, they are valuable as throwing considerable light on the social and political life of the period." Saki, then, becomes the parsing analyst of his own satire.

These "explanatory and conjectural notes" heighten both the satirical effect, for Saki adds to his subtle sniping while clarifying the oblique verse, and the nest-egg-doll, metaliterary quality of a mock-poem in fact written by the pseudonymous satirist who is pretending to annotate the verse, which imitates the translated poem from which he took his name. Saki uses the existential musings of the Persian poem — "In marvel at each man's allotted sphere / I mused 'We know not wherefore we are here';" (ll.1-2) — to ironically expose the irresponsibility, refusal-of-accountability, and nepotism of the Salisbury/Cecil administration: "Said One who ruled o'er markets and bazaars / 'I had an

Uncle once.' His case was clear" (3-4). Saki's gloss reveals that these lines refer to Gerald William Balfour, nephew of Salisbury and President of Board of Trade from November 1900 to March 1905: "Refers presumably to some Vizier having control of Trade affairs. The allusion to an 'uncle' is not easy to explain; some scholars are of opinion that the word has been mistranslated, and should be rendered 'special or remarkable aptitude for a post'." The humour of this explanation lies both in the gloss's clear criticism of nepotism and subsequent faux-scholarly, pretend reversal of that criticism, and that, as with all of Saki's textual notes here, the gloss only heightens the ironic distance between an epic, metaphysical poem and this topical satire of petty politics. Veiled criticisms of Salisbury's policies concerning Manchuria and the Transvaal, pacifists' complaints, some politicians' scapegoating of Disraeli's "Primrose League" legacy, England's hypocritical criticism of other countries' militancy, and a young Winston Churchill (who, some said, only volunteered for the Boer War in order to write about it), all couched in wistful, *Rubáiyát*-like verse, follow the first stanza, with each quatrain ironically glossed. The satirical switches and metafictional moments abound here, with Saki mocking the government through the framework of a found poem set in a distant time when the Cecil dynasty is a strange relic, Saki poking fun at his own lines' shifts from the pastoral to the political, and Saki looking ahead to a time when any scholars who unearth this mock-poem may not understand its references: "[the verses] are valuable as throwing considerable light on the social and political life of the period"; "The following appears to be entirely mystical." These past-present-future concerns only emphasize and in part produce the odd timelessness of what would normally be an ephemeral, of-the-moment parody.

"The Quatrains of Uttar Al Ghibe—II" offers six quatrains that explicitly, along with Gould's caricatures, depict what seem to be Salisbury and two of his ministers (possibly the Secretary State for Foreign Affairs, Henry Charles Keith, and the Secretary of State for the Home Department, Charles Thomson Ritchie) as Middle Eastern Viziers arguing with each other,[129] with the head Vizier noting that events are "'Inevitable,'" which, as Saki explains, "was the celebrated totem of the ruling Sessyl caste, worshipped under the form of a scape-goat (*capra conveniens*) in times of emergency or public excitement." The second quatrain mocks Hicks Beech, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who had raised duties on alcohol and other goods to pay for the Boer War, and so "Fitzgerald's celebration of the grape is given an economic justification" (Frost, *Saki: His Context and Development* 159). The fifth quatrain of six notes the poor condition of London's streets but is glossed as "a satire on the streets of Baghdad, which were notoriously subject to upheaval," while the final quatrain wonders if the Boer War is futile: "A Dreamer asked 'Has War a future got?' / And proved with learned ink that it had not: / Tell not the Slim One 'He who runs should read,' / Lest he correct thy proofs with passing shot" (21-25). Saki's representation of the present British government — then still bogged down in the Boer War — as a dynasty of the past suggests that the British Empire will fade into history; his portrayal of the Conservative rulers as complaining, hypocritical Viziers, those exoticized, Orientalized "Others," and his comparison of London's poor streets to ancient Baghdad's mock the distance between superior, masculine, imperial England and the inferior, feminized, colonized Middle East.

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[129] "A Young Turkish Catastrophe," an anti-suffrage satire involving Viziers — see Chapter 2 — ends with a quatrain, "an improvisation on the heretic poet of Persia" (61).

The five "Quatrains from the Rubaiyat of a Disgruntled Diplomat" (*WG*, May 3, 1913) concern the then-ongoing conflicts in the Balkans and assume that England and the rest of Europe should have a say in the area's state of affairs, given Turkey's role in the area: "We argued much about it and about, / How best the Ottoman to bundle out" (ll. 9-10). The satire basically adds to the early-twentieth-century version of the Balkans stereotype, depicting the peninsula as populated by gamesmen, ridden with strife and chaos, and beset by petty dictators: "And lo, the hunters of the East have got / The Sultan's leavings in a fearful mess" (3-4); "But when too many Caesars resurrect / In one small garden—storms are overhead" (7-8); "The Montenegrin Eagle wears two heads— / Pray what the profit if both heads are swelled?" (15-16)

In Saki's use of the Persian poem in prose fiction,[130] he uses the basic *carpe diem* mood of the work to launch into his own energetic subversions of stodgy, monotonous Edwardian life. In "Reginald on Christmas Presents" (*WG*, Dec. 18, 1901), after a witty excoriation of aunts' gift-giving, Saki, tongue notably in his cheek, first denies, through Reginald, his origins and recent use of the *Rubáiyát*: "Even friends of one's own set, who might be expected to know better, have curious delusions on the subject. I am *not* collecting copies of the cheaper editions of Omar Khayyám" (9). Then he has Reginald mock the public fad for the poem by saying that he has given the "last four" cheap editions he received "to the lift-boy, and I like to think of him reading them, with

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[130] There is a reference to the poem in Munro-Saki's April 6th account of parliamentary doings for "Potted Parliament" (*The Outlook*, April 11, 1914), when Munro-Saki notes Clode's (either a made-up Conservative MP, or the alias for a real one, from a "West of England constituency," as noted in the first instalment of the column, February 21) verse explanation of politicians' evasions of definite answers, as recorded in the parliamentary records:

> As Clode has aptly improvised on Omar:
> The moving finger writes, and having writ
> Not all their irony nor all their wit
> Can pin you down to anything you *said*.

FitzGerald's notes, to his aged mother" (9). Here Saki turns the exotic poem (translated by FitzGerald, who was homosexual) that is, in part, about drinking life to its fullest, into a homoerotic gift, with the "lift-boy" both standing in for Saki, the "wine-serving boy" from the poem, and becoming the knowing or unknowing receptacle of Saki's and Reginald's non-heterosexual interest.

In "Reginald's Rubaiyat" (*WG*, early February 1904), Saki mocks his regular use of FitzGerald's translation as a template for verse satires with editors' rejection of Reginald's first effort at a poem that, he feels, would take "people out of their narrow, humdrum selves" (35): "they said the thing had been done before and done worse, and that the market for that sort of work was extremely limited" (35-36). After this "discouragement," Reginald notes, "the Duchess wanted me to write something in her album—something Persian, you know, and just a little bit decadent" (36). Saki genially mocks the faddish, superficial interest in Omar Khayyám's poem when Reginald flippantly offers to imitate the spirit of the original work:

> "Of course, if you want something really Persian and passionate, with red wine and bulbuls in it," I went on to suggest; but she pulled the book from me.
>
> "Not for worlds. Nothing with red wine or passion in it. Dear Agatha gave me the album, and she would be mortified to the quick–" (37)

It is this spirit and passion of the *Rubáiyát*, the drinking of life to its dregs, that Saki transmutes and infuses into his own work, which generally satirizes and opposes people's "narrow, humdrum selves." Saki's playful use and mockery of the poem and its ignorant aficionados from which his name sprung is, at one and the same time, a comic distancing from yet homage to his origin, a serious reinvention and reworking of the poem's basic themes in order to expose the arid, routinized world of Edwardian England.

In "Judkin of the Parcels" (possibly first published in *WG*, 1909), which may have been written pre-Saki, given its oddly reminiscent tone and first-person narration, we're offered a man who is beaten down by matrimony, as he must constantly bring home parcels to his wife, a man who has failed to imbibe the spirit of life that Saki serves up in the *Rubáiyát*:

> someway I gradually reconstructed the life-history of this trudger of the lanes. It was much the same, no doubt, as that of many others who are from time to time pointed out to one as having been aforetime in crack cavalry regiments and noted performers in the saddle; men who have breathed into their lungs the wonder of the East, have romped through life as through a cotillon, have had a thrust perhaps at the Viceroy's Cup, and done fantastic horsefleshy things around the Gulf of Aden. And then a golden stream has dried up, the sunlight has faded suddenly out of things, and the gods have nodded "Go." And they have not gone. They have turned instead to the muddy lanes and cheap villas and the marked-down ills of life, to watch pear trees growing and to encourage hens for their eggs. And Judkin was even as these others; the wine had suddenly been spilt from his cup of life, and he had stayed to suck at the dregs which the wise throw away. (62)

The rich, adventurous, full enjoyment of life is associated with military, equestrian gambols in the exotic East; now Judkin, we're told, merely rides a stolid roan-mare home, parcels for his wife in hand. He is domesticated and tamed, his wildness and spirit broken. Munro's or Saki's puzzlement and sadness about this man's fate becomes, in Saki's works, a savage attack on matrimony in "The Music on the Hill" or one of many black-humour tales where beastly, untameable children or animals conquer the rigid, insipidly human, adult world. In *The Unbearable Bassington*, the Judkin-like figure of Tom Keriway, who had roamed "through the lands of the Near and Middle East . . . wandered through Hungarian horse-fairs, hunted shy crafty beasts on lonely Balkan hillsides" and who, as the persona of Saki is expressed by his writing, "it might be said that his travels talked of him" (620-21), is now reduced by illness and penury to a faint shadow of what he used to be. Munro, of course, had spent some time in faraway Burma as a mounted officer, and in his August 4, 1914 letter to the *Morning Post* regarding enlistment in the war, notes: "I was a year and a half in an Indian police force. I can ride (and look after a horse), my early experience of a rifle has been, if I may use the Irishism, with a carbine" (see Appendix Four). Loganbill suggests that, "To whatever extent Keriway represents Hector Munro, we have the interesting . . . situation of the author being commented upon by hiw [sic] own omniscient persona" (36), while Langguth argues that the former Keriway, with his "rough-hewn and manly" character, embodies an "idealized version of [Munro]" and "the way, increasingly, he wished to look" (200-01) to not just himself, by 1913, but both his selves. Judging by the final sentence of the chapter concerning the now beaten and faded Keriway, the gap between author-narrator of imaginary realities and the man who had to live in the real world of Edwardian England was becoming an increasingly unacceptable gulf: "He had created a fairyland, but assuredly he was not living in it" (625).

MAPPINED TERROR

The chafing-at-the-bit, rebellious Saki's very name, then, and the poem from which he springs, serves as a reminder not only of the gap between Munro and Saki, but also increasingly became an exhortation for Munro, moulded by his class and society into a routinized, respectable Edwardian gentleman, to metamorphose and become both more beastly and more hyper-masculine in a spirited, martial reckoning with life. If words speak of Saki the author-narrator, deeds should speak of Munro the man. In Munro-Saki's *When William Came* and "An Old Love," the puzzlement and sadness about a boxed-in character such as Judkin turn into fear and loathing of a similar fate befalling

Munro. If the persona of Saki is the spirited, wild answer to a conventional, routinized Munro, Munro-Saki exhorts Munro, through attacks on pacifist males, militant females, and threatening Others, to break out of his shell, fight for a cause, and thus find passion and spirit in being a manly soldier and defender of King and country.

Munro's breaking away from the imaginative, flexible, deliciously dissident world of Saki meant an abandonment of Saki's narrative transformative spaces. Slavoj Žižek points out that, in "The Open Window," Saki offers the "minimal dispositif of the relationship between signifier, reality, and the fantasmatic Real" when Vera, with just "a few words[,] provid[es] the proper symbolic context . . . to transform the window into a fantasy frame" (58). Yet "The Open Window" is but one of many transformative spaces in Saki's world, each initiating different degrees of fantastic change and disruption to the order of "outside reality": the woods in "Gabriel-Ernest" and "The Music on the Hill," the conservatory in "The She-Wolf," the shed in "Sredni Vashtar", "The Lumber Room," the barn in "Bertie's Christmas Eve," the baths in "The Recessional" and "Shock Tactics," the piggery in "The Penance," "The Occasional Garden," and the list goes on. These spaces can be seen as the most obviously symbolic, intra-narrative breaks from Munro's world, if one reads the polecat-ferret's murder of Mrs. De Ropp within the haven of Conradin's shed or the stag's murder of Sylvia in the bushes, for instance, as Saki's attacks on Munro's milieu of Edwardian complacency, from marriage-endorsing aunts and life-deadening wives to spineless, unimaginative men.[131] At the same time, this fictional world is *itself* a transformative space, for once the reader enters the pages, he or she — with the notable exception of Munro-Saki works such as *When William Came* — leaves Munro behind and is ushered into the present narrative of Saki, a world where the inhabitants, décor, and conversation change in fascinating ways, but the general sense of the world remains the same.

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[131] A critic should be wary, however, of speculating on Munro's murky personal history (especially as it is so rarely set down by him) and mingling it with Saki's stories in order to stamp a definite biographical reading onto fictional moments. Just as Vera's open window represents "a framework opening onto a void but doing so pregnantly (in such a way that experience *may* fill it and make it meaningful)" (Chambers 38), so do Saki's transformative spaces offer a number of interpretative ways into his stories, whether biographical or Freudian to Jungian or Foucauldian, but none of these interpretations is ever wholly satisfying precisely because, as in "The Open Window," as Chambers traces, the story shifts back and forth

When the Edwardian reader entered Saki's world, he or she was lured by the promise of fictional romance to a place rather more rebellious and anti-establishment than they may have expected (see Footnote 61). In "The Mappined Life" (written c. 1913), Saki confronts the bourgeois Edwardian reader with a manifesto of sorts, less a story than a declaration of the anti-conventional cut and thrust of most his fiction, which skewers pretense and self-importance. An aunt, Mrs. James Gurtleberry, remarks on the new Mappin Terraces at the London Zoo[132]: "'they give one the illusion of seeing the animals in their natural surroundings. I wonder how much of the illusion is passed on to the animals?'" (479) This question launches Mrs. Gurtleberry's unnamed niece into an elaborate rumination on the basic artificiality of such an environment, which cannot hope

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between conventional, apparently disingenuous storytelling and self-awareness. Vera uses other, partly true stories of the time, concerning "widows deranged by grief or of adventure in imperial outposts," to dupe Nuttel and the reader in a story that simply enlivens, as Vera does with her own fabrication, the circumstances of a boring visit to an average, bourgeois, Edwardian family; the story, then, brings a brief sense of not only the romantic, but the tragic and disturbing into the bourgeois Edwardian reader's own home (Chambers 38-39).

[132] According to the website for the Zoological Society of London (<http://www.zsl.org/discovery-and-learning/zoo-world/zoo-architecture,103,AR,html>. Accessed December 3, 2005.), the Mappin Terraces were built in 1913-14 by John James Joass and devised by Sir Peter Chalmers Mitchell, the society's Secretary from 1903 to 1935. "The construction of the terraces showed what could be done with reinforced concrete, which was then a comparatively new material. The cavernous interior, like that of a real mountain, holds reservoirs of water which is filtered and circulted [sic] into the Aquarium below. The Mappin Terraces houses sloth bears and Hanuman langurs." The Terraces were home to Winnie, the Winnipeg-born, American black bear that inspired A. A. Milne's famous stories. The fake landscape is still noted on at least one London tourism website as "state-of-the-art."

to imitate all the sounds, smells, textures, and spaces of a creature's natural habitat. In fact, the niece notes, another species is more easily deluded:

> "It's rather depressing to think that," said Mrs. Gurtleberry; "they look so spacious and so natural, but I suppose a good deal of what seems natural to us would be meaningless to a wild animal."
>
> "That is where our superior powers of self-deception come in," said the niece; "we are able to live our unreal, stupid little lives on our particular Mappin terrace, and persuade ourselves that we really are untrammelled men and women leading a reasonable existence in a reasonable sphere."
>
> "But good gracious," exclaimed the aunt, bouncing into an attitude of scandalized defence, "we are leading reasonable existences! What on earth do you mean by trammels? We are merely trammelled by the ordinary decent conventions of civilized society."
>
> "We are trammelled," said the niece, calmly and pitilessly, "by restrictions of income and opportunity, and above all by lack of initiative." (480)

The niece goes on to explain that they are complacent creatures of habit and that they do not stand out or make a mark in the world. It is the unending drudge of routine, of meaningless social rounds in which people utter polite niceties, "'the dreadful little everyday acts of pretended importance that give the Mappin stamp to our life'," she says (481).

"The Mappined Life" offers up both the reason for Saki's attacks on Edwardian society — the *raison d'être* for most of his fiction — and the basic structure of his stories. For Saki's mappined tales unfold in front of the realistic backdrop of a staid, boring Edwardian society where savage animals, rebellious children, or trickster dandy-figures can suddenly roam free, temporarily destroying the illusion of the "real world" in which "trammelled" Edwardians move about, seemingly happy in their daily ruts and grinds. Munro, perhaps sick of Saki's imagined disruptions of everyday life and pokes at the Edwardian reader, co-opted Saki into writing *When William Came*, a screed that, in lieu of a Saki-esque transformative space that allows rebellion from within, offers an

England which is a dystopia emasculated and diluted by Germans, invading and conquering from without. Munro got Saki to rally around what no doubt seemed a truly momentous, stand-up-and-be-counted, historical moment, where an average person could become a hero. Munro, dying in the trenches long before World War I ended, would never realize that the European slaughter in which he fought would come to be regarded as one of the most senseless bloody outcomes of a series of narrow-minded blunders that would occur in the entire twentieth century.

SELF-REFLECTIONS AND SELF-DISCLOSURES

Although Munro and Saki had largely blurred together by the time war was declared, it was Saki who penned a story while Munro was serving on the battlefield. "For the Duration of the War" is the last story in the posthumously published collection *The Toys of Peace* (1923) and the last story that Saki (the story evinces his voice and style), who wrote it at the front (Footnote, *The Penguin Complete Saki* 532) of the Great War in which he would meet his end, would pen. Yet "For the Duration of the War" is also Saki's most reflective story; Saki, self-referential and metafictional here, also satirizes himself and his writing in the piece. For the Persian verse fabricated by the Reverend Wilfrid Gaspilton to undermine his wife and jar himself out of a complacent existence is a complex, veiled authorial self-examination of both the homoerotic origin of H. H. Munro's pen-name and many of the themes, tensions, and concerns of Saki's 138 short stories.

The tale contains many of the usual Saki-esque story elements: a retreat to an ideally bucolic and reinvigorating countryside that turns out to be otherwise; upper-middle- or upper-class characters who privately transgress their own moral conservatism through an elaborate public hoax; the natural world as a reflection of the human nature of the protagonists; a relationship that fosters acrimony and individual bitterness, rather than love and a sense of community. The blood-tie, in this case, as in "The Music on the Hill" or "The Holy War," is a marriage. The Reverend Wilfrid Gaspilton — the surname suggesting the sense of suffocation they will feel when moving from London to a country town — moves with his wife Beryl to St. Chuddock's in remote "Yondershire" (532). Instead of the presumably calm countryside turning out to be a harbour of potential violence, however, in "For the Duration of the War," the rural parish is simply too quiet, boring, and rustic for the couple, particularly Mrs. Gaspilton. Her vanity and self-absorption must paradoxically be sated by others:

> Mrs. Gaspilton considered herself as distinctly an interesting personality, and from a limited standpoint she was doubtless right. . . . She would have liked to be the centre of a literary, slightly political salon, where discerning satellites might have recognized the breadth of her outlook on human affairs and the undoubted smallness of her feet. (532)

The Rector's wife, then, feeling that the parish is distinctly too "unfashionable" to provide her with such attention, isolates herself "in an elegant, indolent little world of her own," dedicating herself to a translation of a French book, "*The Forbidden Horsepond*" (533).[133] The Reverend Wilfrid Gaspilton, meanwhile, seeks out the attention of his parishioners but finds himself bored stiff by them and even ignored by the birds on his lawn, while the surrounding nature seems uninspiring to him. The clerical husband becomes more bitter about what he sees as his wife's "ridiculous labours" on her translation of "Baptiste Lepoy's *L'Abreuvoir interdit*" (533). So he cures himself of his irritable boredom and eclipses the efforts of his wife with a "great literary fraud," submitting to a periodical long-lost Persian verses "unearthed and translated by a nephew who was at present campaigning in the Tigris valley" (534). The poems strike a chord with the public and the clergyman's hoax is a roaring success.

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[133] A reference, perhaps, to "The Pond," where Mona imagines a nearby pond to be a great threat.

In a story so concerned with writing, autobiographical and literary allusions abound. The Persian verses concocted by the Reverend Wilfrid Gaspilton are clearly autobiographical in their reference to Munro's pen name and metafictional in their commentary on Saki's fictional themes and obsessions. Yet the story is also concerned with authorial identity and literary fraud, as Saki plays with the idea that the author-narrator of "For the Duration of the War" itself may not be who he seems. (Mrs. Gaspilton shutting herself in to work on the "ridiculous labours" of her French translation project may be an oblique reference to Munro's cloistered writing of his history of the Russian Empire in the Reading Room of the British Museum.[134])

The Reverend William Gaspilton's publication of translated verses "attributed to one Ghurab, a hunter, or, according to other accounts, warden of the royal fishponds" (534), obviously mocks and mirrors Beryl's genuine attempts at a translation concerning an equine watering hole. These Persian verses from around Karmanshah, "in some unspecified century" (534), are also a satire of the poem from which Munro took his pen name and are broken up by glosses, as with Saki's "Quatrains of Uttar Al Ghibe," that slyly mock historical and literary critics' naïve socio-historical and textual interpretations of a poem. The verses seem to also be a tongue-in-cheek reference to Saki's own popularity as a short-story writer in the Edwardian era, a reference that can be taken both lightly and darkly, given the poem's reminder regarding "Pride," Saki's constant sardonic tone, and Munro/Saki's possible resentment of his "lack of a wider fame" (Langguth 193). The sly, intranarrative stanzas are also metanarrative, for they are both parodic and metafictional, not merely a play on FitzGerald's poem or a riposte to the dull, ossifying life of rustic complacency and self-isolation that the reverend and his wife now lead; the poetic lines comprise Saki's commentary on the abiding ideas, themes, and tensions in his prose:

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[134] Saki also mocks Munro's poorly received *The Rise of the Russian Empire* in "The Oversight," where Lady Prowche's husband, Sir Richard, is writing "'*Land-tenure in Turkestan*'," with its history of "'the tribal disputes of Central Asian clansmen'" (515, 514). Previously, Sir Richard had been the scribe of a "'volume on *Domestic Life in Tartary*. The critics all blamed it for a lack of concentration'" (515).

"A Mouse that prayed for Allah's aid
  Blasphemed when no such aid befell:
A Cat, who feasted on that mouse,
  Thought Allah managed vastly well.

Pray not for aid to One who made
  A set of never-changing Laws,
But in your need remember well
  He gave you speed, or guile—or claws.

Some laud a life of mild content:
  Content may fall, as well as Pride.
The Frog who hugged his lowly Ditch
  Was much disgruntled when it dried.

'You are not on the Road to Hell,'
  You tell me with fanatic glee:
Vain boaster, what shall that avail
  If Hell is on the road to thee?

A Poet praised the Evening Star,
  Another praised the Parrot's hue:
A Merchant praised his merchandise,
  And he, at least, praised what he knew." (534-35)

The poem itself is fittingly exotic and Oriental, in homage to the *Rubáiyát*, but the style and language are also appropriate because of Saki's abiding interest in the blood-feuds and supposed romanticism of Eastern Europe (see Chapter 3), and the alluring Oriental stereotypes surrounding the Middle East and Asia (see Chapter 3 and also the story "The

Guests"). The first stanza suggests, too, the capriciousness of Fate and Fate's superiority to any other divine power, the personal exploitation and abuse of religion, as noted by Munro in *The Rise of the Russian Empire* and criticized by Saki in various stories, and the prominence of cats in Saki's oeuvre (see Chapter 2), not to mention the twinned philosophies of "eat or be eaten" and "nature, red in tooth and claw" that run through Saki's writing.

As shown by the Reverend William Gaspilton's impious hoax, religion is not lauded but mocked in Saki's fiction, as elaborated on in the second stanza; the clergyman, a sort of sub-Saki who bears metanarrative verse within Saki's own narrative, exhorts people to use their spirit, skill, and wit, much as the niece in "The Mappined Life" wishes that people would show individual pluck and spark — act, rather than pray to God or even wait for Fate to take its course, which it will do soon enough anyway (as in "The Hounds of Fate" or "The Music on the Hill"). Saki's clever characters frequently get the last laugh (or tear) when they "need" to adapt to new or straitened circumstances, using their often barbed "guile." More helpless creatures, such as Conradin in "Sredni Vashtar," rely on Fate and/or Nature, as when the boy fervently hopes that his polecat-ferret will kill his aunt and it does so.

"Content" and "Pride" often fall in the author's stories, although it is invariably the human bearers of those Saki-esque sins who do the falling. Complacency, illustrated here by a frog clinging to his ditch much as a person stays in his or her well-trod rut, is given a vicious jolt in "The Easter Egg," "The Unrest-Cure," "Tea," and dozens of other stories, while unbearably proud and self-absorbed upper-class twits are given their comeuppance in "The Boar-Pig," "The She-Wolf," "The Occasional Garden," and many other tales.

The fifth stanza most obviously winks at the reader, letting them know that this poem is in fact about Saki's stories. For Saki turns himself into the usually reviled figure (in his fiction) of the Merchant here, sardonically praising and commenting on his literary "goods" while writing not only about what he "knew" — the tensions, sentiments, and outlooks which occupy him in the writing of his short fiction — but what he hopes he offers in his stories: a "breathed . . . spirit," as in Ghurab's poetry, "of comfortable, even-tempered satire and philosophy, disclosing a mockery that did not trouble to be bitter, a joy in life that was not passionate to the verge of being troublesome" (534).

Just as in the verses that Wilfrid's nephew discovered, so in Saki "Woman appeared little" (535), at least in a romantic context; Saki's stories focus more often on homoerotic encounters than Romeo-and-Juliet passions. Thus the "love-philosophy of the East" that comes from the presumably conservative clergyman is, with its non-gendered object of desire, entirely in keeping with the homoeroticism of both the "Rubáiyát" and the non-heterosexuality Saki's own work in its expression of self- or same-sex love:

> "O Moon-faced Charmer, with Star-drowned Eyes,
>   And cheeks of soft delight, exhaling musk,
> They tell me that thy charm will fade; ah well,
>   The Rose itself grows hue-less in the Dusk." (535)

Saki's knowing parodic review of his fictional themes and preoccupations simultaneously discourages and invites textual and biographical analysis. If the sixth stanza takes a political turn and mocks the pacifists who did not want a European war — "A Sultan dreamed day-long of Peace, / The while his Rivals' armies grew" — with the narrator's gloss noting that critics "pointed out" that such a verse "would apply to the political conditions of the present day" (535), and the seventh stanza remarks on Munro's sadness at becoming dull and less charming in his middle age,[135] the seventh stanza also emphasizes the deathliness that hangs over the rest of the Reverend Wilfrid Gaspilton's excerpts, and indeed much of FitzGerald's adaptation, eerily prophesying the very "Dusk" which would envelop Munro in November 1916. Is Saki's ominous "recognition of the inevitable, a cold breath blowing across the poet's comfortable estimate of life" (535) a reinterpretation of Munro's increasingly fatalist outlook on the front?

"There is a Sadness in each Dawn,
  A Sadness that you cannot rede,
The joyous Day brings in its train
  The Feast, the Loved One, and the Steed.

Ah, there shall come a Dawn at last
  That brings no life-stir to your ken,
A long, cold Dawn without a Day,
  And ye shall rede its Sadness then."   (535-36)

The Scottish words here ("rede"[136] and "ken") suggest a nod to Munro's Caledonian patrilineage. Saki's mockery of complacency and his own fictional themes gives way to a markedly sombre tone. Here, reading between the lines of Saki's intranarrative poem, is likely the transmuted war-weariness and anxiety of Munro on a front of the Great War, meditating on a day when he may have to confront the riddle of death; the story's end, where Ghurab aficionados form a fan club (a mockery of the actual Omar Khayyam Society) and a "flood of inquiries, criticisms, and requests for information . . . naturally poured in [concerning] . . . this long-hidden poet" (536), can be seen as Saki's denial — perhaps serious, perhaps tongue-in-cheek — of his stature as an author and a gentle request to the public to remember Munro, not Saki. If seen in this light, Saki's glosses are self-mocking reminders that art should not be taken too seriously. Munro's eager enlistment may well have been, in part, his way of defending a way of being, rather than writing, and shaking himself out of a complacent, "comfortable estimate of life" with the most extreme "unrest-cure" imaginable: "'For the Duration of the War' . . . is deeply self-reflexive . . . That Munro is writing about himself as well as Omar here is confirmed by the specific topics of the verses, which are precisely those with which Munro was concerned at the front: false expectations of peace, active participation in war, and confrontation with death" (Forbes 249).

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[135] Langguth conjectures that, by his fifth decade, the closeted Munro may have resented middle age in part because his looks and appeal were fading (192), though he feels that many other factors influenced Munro's supposed state of distress as reflected in *The Unbearable Bassington* (1912). By the time Saki was writing "For the Duration of the War" at the front, this veiled reference to a romance between creatures of unspecified gender may simply be a pining for his times of "chumming" with lovers in Europe and London and his past, "merry, feckless" lifestyle (194), rather than a forlorn reference to his or his past lovers' fading good looks, although when Munro joined the Army, they pulled his decaying upper teeth (photo page facing 225).

[136] An archaic verb meaning "read (a riddle or dream)" (*Canadian Oxford Dictionary*).

Thus, as the Reverend Wilfrid Gaspilton's supposed nephew "in military employ in Mesopotamia" (534) sends back the poetry of an anonymous ancient Persian, so Saki sends back to England this story written at the front, a story which reflects on Munro's personal desires and Saki's literary preoccupations. Although the public may not have called too loudly for Saki's fictional missives during wartime, the Reverend Wilfrid Gaspilton's readership clamours for the disclosure of his nephew. Yet "[m]ilitary considerations forbade any disclosures which might throw unnecessary light on his nephew's movements," so not until after the war has ended will "the Rector's position . . . be one of unthinkable embarrassment" (536). Given Saki's penchant for twist endings, however, it is surprising that he doesn't extricate the clergyman from this dilemma, for there is a way by which the literary cheat will never have to reveal his nephew. Perhaps, though, the possibility was too oppressively "close to home" for Munro or Saki to consider; but while it may not have happened to the Reverend Wilfrid Gaspilton's imaginary relation, Fate had a soldier's death in store for Munro as dawn neared on November 14.

SUB-ALTER EGOS

While the author of the over-celebrated poem in "For the Duration of the War" is a fraud, Saki offers a number of other characters who stand in for Munro and/or Saki — particularly author-figures who have taken pen names — and increasingly undercut Saki's authority. As the war approaches, these sub-alter egos are used to de-romanticize the "creator-genius" idea of the author and to assert the primacy of life over art, as if to remind Munro-Saki that defending a way of life, not art, means taking up arms and putting down the pen.

In "The Story-Teller," as discussed earlier, Saki writes about a man who can easily be read as a stand-in for Saki — he tells children a macabre story in which goody-two-shoes virtue is punished, thereby undermining their aunt; if "'those children will assail her in public with demands for an improper story'" (354), then Saki is happy to provide such children with not just one improper story, but many. In "The Stalled Ox," Saki's stand-in is Theophil Eshley, "an artist by profession, a cattle painter by force of environment" (344), much as Saki is a fiction-writer by profession and occasional historian and journalist by force of environment, or much as Munro is a soldier and imperial officer by lineage, but Saki is a fiction-writer by force of environment. Eshley paints idyllic pictures of nature until his neighbour Adela Pingsford is besieged by an ox who chews up her garden and then enters her morning-room; soon Eshley is producing artistic "sensations" depicting the violent invasion of domestic life by wild nature, such as "'Ox in a Morning-Room, Late Autumn'" and "'Barbary Apes Wrecking a Boudoir'" (348-49). The parallel to Saki's career, built by the time of "The Stalled Ox" on stories precisely like it — about disruptions of Edwardian life by nature — is obvious, and Adela Pingsford may even represent the calm, routinized Munro who was often forced to give way to the disruptive Saki; in the case of Pingsford and Eshley, at least, "nothing in the nature of a real reconciliation has taken place between them" (349).

In "On Approval," Saki turns himself into Gebhard Knopfschrank, a mysterious Bohemian artist who has come to London from rural Germany. The local critics at the Restaurant Nuremberg debate the merits of the mysterious man's paintings, unsure if they will be esteemed highly on the market and praised as genius. The otherwise reclusive artist is not shy to show his latest works every evening at the restaurant, and his portfolio of work, Saki notes in a wryly self-mocking tone, was, if

> not obviously stamped with the hall-mark of genius, at any rate it was remarkable for its choice of an unusual and unvarying theme. His pictures always represented some well-known street or public place in London, fallen into decay and denuded of its human population, in the place of which there roamed a wild fauna, which, from its wealth of exotic species, must have originally escaped from Zoological Gardens and travelling beast shows. "Giraffes drinking at the fountain pools, Trafalgar Square," was one of the most notable and characteristic of his studies, while even more sensational was the gruesome picture of "Vultures attacking dying camel in Upper Berkeley Street." There were also photographs of the large canvas on which he had been engaged for some months, and which he was now endeavouring to sell to some enterprising dealer or adventurous amateur. The subject was "Hyaenas asleep in Euston Station," a composition that left nothing to be desired in the way of suggesting unfathomed depths of desolation. (387)

The coterie of restaurant-frequenters and amateur art collectors wonder if the works will prove a sound investment or rash buy; after all, "'Of course it may be immensely clever, it may be something epoch-making in the realm of art,' said Sylvia Strubble to her own particular circle of listeners, 'but, on the other hand, it may be merely mad'" (387). The question, then, is "'how to place the man and his work'" (387)? Once again, Saki seems to be mocking his own longevity as a writer; his work is neither masterful nor mad, but merely remarkable and mostly of a piece, he suggests. Saki's portfolio of wild animals briefly conquering sedate civilization will not be worth a great deal, and he will fade into a distant memory, as Knopfschrank does, returning to Pomerania.

In "The Lumber-Room" (*MP*, October 14, 1913), a young boy named Nicholas finds, after unlocking the attic that proves to be a safe haven for his imagination, a tapestry (one of Munro's hobbies was "tapestry painting," done on linen to simulate the look of tapestry ["Biography" 691]) on which a hunter, accompanied by his two dogs, has shot a stag as four wolves approach. Later, after successfully thwarting his aunt's attempts to discipline him for sneaking into the attic, Nicholas sits at tea, happily concluding "that the huntsman would escape with his hounds while the wolves feasted on the stricken stag" (377). Here is the imagination as a haven for wild, unfettered contrivances, dark revenge fantasies, and private authority through the authorship of a narrative. Saki's world, like the imaginative space of the story, is an imaginative retreat from which the author-narrator could fire his ink-dipped, barbed satirical arrows at the conventional, bourgeois Edwardian world in which Munro lived.

In "Mark," Saki offers a sub-alter ego in Augustus Mellowkent, a novelist with a small but loyal and growing following, who has taken the pen name "Mark" at his publisher's behest in order to project a vision of "'some one strong and silent, able but unwilling to answer questions . . . some one strong and beautiful and good'" (470). Mellowkent is in the midst of writing his eighth novel and describing a scene where a rector's daughter becomes smitten with the postman (only to break an awkward pause with """How is your mother's rheumatism?"""[471]), when a salesman, Caiaphas Dwelf, drops by.[137] As Dwelf drones on, reading entries from and extolling the virtues of the *Right Here* encyclopedia he wishes Mellowkent to buy, the writer

> sat and watched the hard-featured, resolute, pitiless salesman . . . A spirit of wistful emulation took possession of the author. Why could he not live up to the cold stern name he had adopted? Why must he sit here weakly and listen to this weary, unconvincing tirade? Why could he not be Mark Mellowkent for a few moments, and meet this man on level terms? (473)

And so Augustus, living up to his other name (although, ironically, his given name connotes the "august" air of one who is imposing, dignified, and noble), interrupts Gwent's sales pitch with one of his own, reading out excerpts from his novels and, in the stultifying process, besting the unwanted caller at his own game.

As Loganbill points out (53-58), Saki often shows people and societies as possessing a double nature in such stories as "The Ministers of Grace" and "The Feast of Nemesis." Yet "Mark" is particularly interesting, as Loganbill partially realizes, because

> while the primary conflict of the story is between the author and the salesman, the resolution of that conflict is dependent upon the resolution of a secondary conflict within the author himself. . . . 'Who (or which) shall I be?' . . . upon the answer to this question lies the outcome of the story. (58)

Is this story yet another channelling and inversion, through Saki, of Munro's concern with making good on his family's imperial, military legacy? Here, the author's pseudonym likely reflects Munro's wish to meet the standard of his patronym, while Mellowkent's books are the opposite of Saki's stories (although Saki is also poking fun at an author's need to plead and prod for sales and the publisher's obtuseness about what

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[137] In a story about names, "Caiaphas" recalls the Jewish high priest who made sure that Jesus was found guilty; thus the salesman in Saki's story is associated both with the sort of hypocritical cold-bloodedness of such a figure and a ruthless Jewish mercantilism.

Augustus' name truly means[138]). "Mark" suggests both "living up to the mark" and "leaving one's mark," and evokes various gun terms; the name smacks of military manliness. Augustus' last name, Mellowkent, is his undoing, as it connotes placidity and inability (kent sounds like "can't"), and Munro's last name is a constant reminder of his failure to emulate his father and "live up to the cold stern name" (as his brother Charles did, first in Burma, then in Ireland) of generations of men who were imperial adventurers, officers, and fighters. At least Saki's fiction, with its sharp, fiercely wild, unconventional stories, are the antithesis of Mark's boring, lengthy novels, with their ridiculously idyllic nature scenes and unbelievably dull romances.

It is, however, in August Mellowkent's female counterpart, who appears in the 1913 novel of Munro-Saki anxiety and selves-exhortation, that Saki's clearest sub- and meta-authorial mirror-image can be found:

> A tone of literary distinction was imparted to the group by the presence of Augusta Smith, better known under her pen-name of Rhapsodie Pantril, author of a play that had had a limited but well-advertised success in Sheffield and the United States of America, author also of a book of reminiscences, entitled *Things I Cannot Forget*. She had beautiful eyes, a knowledge of how to dress, and a pleasant disposition, cankered just a little by a perpetual dread of the non-recognition of her genius. As the woman, Augusta Smith, she probably would have been unreservedly happy; as the superwoman, Rhapsodie Pantril, she lived within the borderline of discontent. Her most ordinary remarks were framed with the view of arresting attention; some once said of her that she ordered a sack of potatoes with the air of one who is making inquiry for a love-philtre. (740)

The similarities are notable: Augusta's *nom de plume* is sexual, while Munro's is exotic and sensual, Rhapsodie's insecurity may be a slight exaggeration of Munro/Saki's own worries about literary posterity, and Munro's friends noted the man's sense of style and his kind nature, while Cecil William Mercer noticed that Munro was not particularly witty in conversation (Lambert 34). Whereas Augusta's alter ego, the "superwoman" — playing on Nietszche's notion of the transcendent *Untermensch*, which Saki riffed off again with the title of his 1914 collection, *Beasts and Super-Beasts*; also predicts Freud's "superego" — Rhapsodie Pantril, has unhappily not found a greater, superior state, then Saki's originator, Munro, has not yet reached his manly expectations. Munro-Saki describes Rhapsodie as talking "vaguely, but impressively" (744) and "vaguely but beautifully to a small audience" (783), reflecting a growing concern that Saki has been writing elegantly about little of substance to a small group of readers, and that the time has come, with *When William Came*, to summon the nation to rally around a truly monumental issue — the defence of the British Empire against the Kaiser's growing threat. If suddenly, during the party, "she realized that the Augusta Smith in [Rhapsodie Pantril] craved refreshment" (783), then with his 1913 call-to-arms, Munro-Saki was realizing, through his co-opting of Saki, that the Munro in him needed to fight for a cause. It is little wonder, then, that as the divided, attention-hungry Rhapsodie fades from the book, the chapter ends with Tony Luton, the backbone-less entertainer, finding his mettle and "sign[ing] on as a deckhand in the Canadian Marine. . . . there had been some shred of glory amid the trumpet triumph of that July afternoon" (785).

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[138] According to Langguth, however, Lane was aware of rumours in the office that Munro was homosexual, to the point where — though Langguth offers no source for this anecdote — if "anyone raised the topic around Lane, he put his hands over his ears and pretended not to hear" (183).

While Saki's world is a place of sudden twists, sharp turns, murderous about-faces, casual reincarnations, remarkable transmogrifications, blackly comic reversals, and dark reprisals, Munro-Saki wants just one, seemingly simple shift — the metamorphosis from unassuming Edwardian gentleman and rebellious satirical author into manly, Empire-defending soldier. As Solodow points out in *The World of Ovid's* Metamorphoses, metamorphosis is often exclusive of morality; certainly Saki's fiction is often deeply amoral or unconventional (and so seemingly immoral), but while the metamorphoses in Saki's fiction take many forms, a muddied Munro-Saki's desired final shape was that of Edwardian military man, a metamorphosis that "is clarification. . . . a change which preserves, an alteration which maintains identity, a change of form by which content becomes represented in form" (174). Munro's basic desire and need to fight for his country had been hidden, his ferocity (which wolves, a favourite Saki animal, commonly represent) displaced onto and redirected in Saki's fiction. Perhaps, too, Munro felt that Saki had slipped further and further from Munro and Munro's world. As Charles Paul Segal notes about Ovid's tales, when a character moves into a "symbolic landscape," such an entrance

> constitutes a separation from the familiar, from the sheltered world of civilization and society, and brings . . . an encounter with the violent instincts and passions laid bare and unchecked by the usual restraints. . . . The final form of this loss of orientation is . . . the metamorphosis itself wherein the character loses his familiar relation not only with the outside world, but even with his own person. (18)

Saki's immersion in and creation of his own fictional landscape necessitated leaving Munro behind, but World War I became a vast proving-ground for many men who needed to reassert their authority, power, and place in the world to themselves, if not others. Munro-Saki's desired merger and metamorphosis into Munro the soldier was borne of the need to return to a long-wished for duty that had eluded Munro's sickly grasp in Burma. Such metamorphosis, once finalized with enlistment, meant "loss. In exchange, so to speak, for what they win in clarity and permanence, the transformed men and women give up something. Through metamorphosis they preserve only one aspect, occasionally a few aspects, of their character. They no longer possess it in its rich, complex entirety. Clarification is simplification" (Solodow 189). Hence *When William*

Came seems shrill and one-note, while "An Old Love" is a jingoistic diatribe. Munro-Saki the aspiring soldier and propagandist was turning away from the multi-faceted, darkly glittering constellations of Saki's literary universe and moving along a single-minded, insular, patriotic rut where only deeds counted. For, after all, metamorphosis "renders statement useless: appearance and action alone tell who a person is" (190). In retracting his savaging beast's claws and embracing a manly ideal, Munro-Saki was in fact rejecting the dynamism, flux, and wild imagination of Saki's fiction for the status quo and stasis of a final identity as Munro the soldier. Saki's use of author-figures in his fiction who, like him, have alter egos, can be increasingly seen in the light of subordinating art to nature and to life. The mockery of literary criticism in the poetic glosses of Saki's *Rubáiyát* political satires, too, suggest that Saki often "preferred to challenge Art's right to Life" (Frost, *Saki: His Context and Development* 149), rather than value art above all else. Mark Mellowkent reduces writing to selling books, while Rhapsodie Pantril's authorial persona merely utters pretty words. Munro wanted to fight for ideals, not ideas, and words became, for Munro-Saki, a propagandizing means to a patriotic end. If metamorphosis is a "phenomenon in which two domains meet, art and experience" (Solodow 230), Munro's enlistment signalled the rejection of Saki's art for a soldier's experience of bloody, brutal warfare.

Yet even in the stony face of Munro's eventual, implacable self-transformation into military man, a story written early in 1914, after *When William Came*, re-examines and questions both Munro's and Saki's preoccupations with heterosexual and non-heterosexual manliness, suffragettes, and the place of art in an absurd world of annihilation and destruction.

DECONSTRUCTING EXPECTATIONS IN "THE EAST WING"

Saki's short story "The East Wing" (*Lucas' Annual*, September 1914), originally written after Munro-Saki's reactionary *When William Came* and likely in the same year as Munro enthusiastically enlisted (see my prefatory note in Appendix Two for the provenance of the story), is a fascinating collision, revision, and deconstruction of the tensions, paradoxes, and preoccupations of Saki's own short fiction, and even involves a questioning of Munro-Saki's anti-suffragette stance and anti-/pro-heteronormative shifts. A forgotten Edwardian short story with the existential angst of a Beckett play (it is subtitled "A Tragedy in the Manner of the Discursive Dramatists," which is another poke at Shaw; see Letter #31 and my prefatory note in Appendix Two), involving a child who is more valued when false than real, the simultaneous beauty and senselessness of death, a clergyman who lives vicariously through the violence of suffragettes, and a woman so bored by her upper-class existence that she will possibly murder house-guests to escape her drudgery, "The East Wing" exceeds Saki's "dependent dissidence" — that authorial resistance to yet reliance on the routine and monotony of the bourgeois and upper-class Tory worlds in which Munro lived — because it undercuts the reader's, and Saki's, established dependence on certain recurring concerns, ideas, and conflicts in the author's fiction. In "The East Wing," Saki so complicates and reorders some of his usual themes and situations that he effectively undercuts and casts doubt on many of the values commonly espoused in his earlier fiction. Initially a typical Saki country-house farce involving selfish bourgeois wits, the story soon slips away from Saki's usual dependent dissidence, which often offers such subversive conclusions as: homosexuality is preferable to marriage; the stifling routine and dullness of life necessitate violence, hoaxes, and self-delusions; imagination must often conquer reality in order to make existence more bearable. These rebellious ideas are toyed with and upset in Saki's atypically absurd, existential "The East Wing."[139]

At the Gramplains' party, the guests discover, in the middle of the night, that the east wing of the house is ablaze.[140] Lucien Wattleskeat, like Reginald, Clovis, and many other of Saki's male characters before him, is the non-heterosexual, dandy protagonist: "Lucien was a young man who regarded himself with an undemonstrative esteem, which the undiscerning were apt to mistake for indifference. Several women of his acquaintance were on the look-out for nice girls for him to marry, a vigil in which he took no share" (713). Lucien is an avid bridge-player, as Munro was, and his indifference to all but himself is more pronounced than Saki's other male protagonists, but even this indifference is cleverly undermined by the end of the story. Stern talks of the prevalence of "the solitary narcissist" (282) in Saki's stories, yet Saki curiously transgresses his own convention in "The East Wing" by not making Lucien simply a "narcissistic figure [who] attracts others and annihilates them, making them see how empty and insufficient they are when compared to him" (283). Lucien's refusal to risk his life for Mrs. Gramplain's daughter, before he abruptly changes his mind, serves as a sort of elegy for Saki's dandy figures:

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[139] The author-narrator makes a brief nod to the ruling Edwardian elite's extreme reliance on their working-class handlers — Mrs. Gramplain says, "I'm so glad you have come' . . . 'servants are so little help in an emergency of this kind'" (715) — and while there are few mentions of contemporaneous inventions, such as the car or phone, in his oeuvre, Saki seems to both anticipate such an observation and gently mock the growing worship of technology here:

> "The telephone unfortunately is in the east wing," said the hostess; "so is the telephone-book. Both are being devoured by the flames at this moment. It makes one feel dreadfully isolated. Now if the fire had only broken out in the west wing instead, we could have used the telephone and had the fire-engines here by now."
>
> "On the other hand," objected Lucien, "Canon Clore and Major Boventry and myself would probably have met with the fate that has overtaken the telephone-book. I think I prefer the present arrangement." (715)

[140] The guests' names, too, suggest complacency or, in some cases, boredom masking potential rebellion. "Gramplain" suggests both "grump" and a small measurement of plainness, and so a tiny, flat life; ironically, Mrs. Gramplain is far from plain in her dealings. Often in Saki's stories, characters' names are ironically revealing: "Lucien" is related to the Latin "lux" or light, suggesting that he sees the light of truth (or beauty), while Mrs. Gramplain is far from plain in her dealings. The stodgy-sounding "Lucien Wattleskeat" suggests the Latin for "light" — implying that he sees the light of truth and/or beauty — and, with "wattle," the possibly phallic, "loose fleshy appendage on the head or throat of a turkey or other birds," while "skeet" refers to "a shooting sport in which a clay target is thrown from a trap to simulate the flight of a bird" (*Canadian Oxford Dictionary*). "Boventry" conjures up both Coventry, an industrial city in the West Midlands, and the snotty attitude expressed in the phrase "send a person to Coventry," meaning: "refuse to associate with or speak to a person" (*Canadian Oxford Dictionary*); the name also suggests, in its first syllable, that the man is "bovine," that is, placid and boring. Similarly, "Clore" rhymes with "bore" and, in French, is the transitive form of "to close." While the real Mildred suggests the mill of the daily grind and dread, the imaginary Eva suggests Eve, the first woman, and so perhaps shame.

> "I didn't know you had a daughter," said Lucien, "and really I don't think I can risk my life to save some one I've never met or even heard about. You see, my life is not only wonderful and beautiful to myself, but if my life goes, nothing else really matters—to me. I don't suppose you can realise that, to me, the whole world as it exists to-day, the Ulster problem, the Albanian tangle, the Kikuyu controversy, the wide field of social reform and Antarctic exploration, the realms of finance, and research and international armaments, all this varied and crowded and complex world, all comes to a complete and absolute end the moment my life is finished. Eva might be snatched from the flames and live to be the grandmother of brilliant and charming men and women; but, as far as I should be concerned, she and they would no more exist than a vanished puff of cigarette smoke or a dissolved soda-water bubble. And if, in losing my life, I am to lose her life and theirs, as far as I personally am concerned with them, why on earth should I, personally, risk my life to save hers and theirs?" (715-16)

Lucien's blithe self-absorption and utter disinterest in altruism is echoed in Major Boventry's refusal, which he couches in concern for his fiancée and the smallness of the sacrifice:

> "Lady," said the Major stumblingly, "I would gladly give my life to rescue your Eva, or anybody's Eva for the matter of that, but my life is not mine to give. I am engaged to the sweetest little woman in the world. I am everything to her. What would my poor little Mildred say if they brought her news that I had cast away my life in an endeavour, perhaps fruitless, to save some unknown girl in a burning country house?" (716)

The dandy's languid self-preservation is no different from, and indeed more honest than, the soldier's false concerns about duty and reputation. Neither Lucien nor Major

Boventry, is, as Mrs. Gramplain puts it, "'the man I take you for'" (716), although these men's beautiful lives are soon gladly given, and taken, for the sake of an even more beautiful, imagined woman, and for the transcendent beauty of Art.

Soldier and dandy are initially linked when Lucien's inward, self-sufficient sexuality is cheekily suggested by the Major and then complicated by Lucien himself:

> "Well, let's go and look at it," assented Lucien, "though it's against my principles to meet trouble half-way."
>
> "Grasp your nettle, that's what I say," observed Boventry.
>
> "In this case, Major, it's not our nettle," retorted Lucien, carefully shutting the bedroom door behind him. (714)

Boventry's encouragement of Lucien to summon his manhood doubles as a sly reference to masturbation, echoing the "Morning Post" pun in "Gabriel-Ernest" (see Chapter 1), yet here it is a military man exhorting a dandy to whip himself into shape, in a sense, while the dandy slyly asserts his sexual independence and denies that he and the Major are sharing a "nettle," at least "in this case." In fact, in this story, the risqué opening exchange between seemingly diffident dandy and ostensibly gruff military man sets up the "solemnly excited" (713), fatal alliance which follows, and Saki, in opposition to Munro-Saki's *When William Came* and "An Old Love," implies that, despite their respective façades of languid indifference and dutiful seriousness, dandy and soldier are merely flip sides of the same self-important, homosocial mask of manliness. (Canon Clore, with his "air of one who lends dignity to a fact by according it gracious recognition" [714], is also a self-important male figure, but he is more self-absorbed in his sermonizing, passive, and, with his robe of "Albanian embroidery" [714], markedly out of place and backwards, as with all religious figures in the author-narrator's stories). Both the initially apathetic Lucien and the more eager Major Boventry are annihilated by the even more powerfully superficial figure of

Eva, the imagined daughter of Mrs. Gramplain, yet there is no suggestion that woman is conquering man; the two men's sacrifice for imagined womanhood is the most serious element of Saki's comic, wistful story.

In a reversal, then, of one common Saki-esque plot, whereby a woman is uninteresting to or threatens to trap a man in the jail of routine, here an ultimately unattainable, inaccessible female art subject is admired by the more real (yet still fictional) protagonist who is himself typically the subject of admiration in Saki's stories. The self-absorbed, non-heterosexual Lucien is enthralled by the imagined product of a sterile marriage, while a military man is willing to forgo his own imminent marriage for the same imaginary girl. In subverting his tendency to prioritize the Reginalds and Clovises of his stories over other characters, and complicating the denigration of females in some of his stories, even Saki the narrator is momentarily conquered by the figment of a bored middle-aged woman's imagination that subsumes all the guests in "The East Wing."

As the protagonist introduced to the reader and the martyr by the end, Lucien Wattleskeat is clearly the character for whom the reader is meant to have the most sympathy; certainly his pronounced wit and centrality to the story lend his implied self- or same-sexuality a stature unaccorded to Mrs. Gramplain's marriage, which seems to be the fount of her misery, as in many Saki stories (see Chapter 2): "'I was married, when little more than a child, to my husband, and there has never been any real bond of affection between us. We have been polite and considerate to each other—nothing more'" (716). Yet this loveless and dull marriage leads to the death of Lucien. For the hostess's barren union has led her to invent the daughter for whom Lucien will sacrifice his life:

> "I sometimes think that if we had had a child things might have been different."

> "But—your daughter Eva?" queried the Canon, and the two other men echoed his question.
>
> "I have never had a daughter," said the woman quietly, yet amid the roar and crackle of the flames her voice carried, so that not a syllable was lost. "Eva is the outcome of my imagination. I so much wanted a little girl and at last I came to believe that she really existed. She grew up, year by year, in my mind, and when she was eighteen I painted her portrait, a beautiful young girl with masses of golden hair. Since that moment the portrait has been Eva. I have altered it a little with the changing years—she is twenty-one now—and I have re-painted her dress with every incoming fashion. . . . Every day I have sat with her for an hour or so, telling her my thoughts, or reading to her. And now she is there, above, with the flames and the smoke, unable to stir, waiting for the deliverance that does not come." (716-17)

Note the emphasis on the surface of things and the sense of Aestheticism here; as in Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, an art image eclipses its creator. Lucien decides to try to save the painting because Mrs. Gramplain's story about Eva is "'the most beautiful thing I have ever heard'" and "'Death in this case is more beautiful'" than life (717). The truly beautiful appearance of art trumps the false depth of reality, much as Wilde, in his transgressive aesthetic, destabilizes the pre-eminent value of depth: "Wilde insistently subverts those dominant categories which signify subjective depth. . . . At work here is a transgressive desire which makes its opposition felt as a disruptive reaction upon, and inversion of, the categories of subjective depth which hold in place the dominant order which proscribes that desire" (Dollimore 15-16). In "The East Wing," however, Saki relates such beautiful shallowness to the existential notion that the nothingness of death is likewise beautiful (Wilde, on the contrary, rarely talks about death, except to aestheticize it in a decorous portrayal of a Christian afterlife, as in "The Happy Prince"). The "'deliverance'" is not the death of someone living, but the rescue of something dead, an act of self-sacrifice that takes on an absurd yet haunting pathos as Saki describes it. This imaginary girl,[141] so spurned by the others when they thought she was a flesh-and-blood stranger — Lucien says, "'really I don't think I can risk my life to save someone I've never met or even heard about'" (715) and Major Boventry has already pledged his life to his fiancée, so he cannot "'save some unknown girl in a burning country house'" (716) — now becomes a real being for whom Lucien and Major Boventry will gladly lose their lives. The two men take their perverse prioritizing of their lives over others' to its "logical" conclusion, realizing after their hostess' confession, in an appropriately Wildean inversion, that art is even more beautifully superficial, and thus important, than their own lives:

> "It is beautiful," said Lucien, "it is the most beautiful thing I have ever heard."
>
> "Where are you going?" asked his hostess, as the young man moved towards the blazing staircase of the East wing.
>
> "I am going to try and save her," he answered; "as she has never existed my death cannot compromise her future existence. I shall go into nothingness, and she, as far as I am concerned, will go into nothingness too, but then she has never been anything else."
>
> "But your life, your beautiful life?"
>
> "Death in this case is more beautiful."
>
> The Major started forward.
>
> "I am going too," he said simply.
>
> "To save Eva?" cried the woman.
>
> "Yes," he said; "my little Mildred will not grudge me to a woman who has never existed." (717)

Explaining Wilde, Dollimore writes: "Truth, the epistemological legitimation of the real, is rhetorically subordinated to its antitheses—apearance [sic], style, the lie—and thereby simultaneously both appropriated, perverted, and displaced. Reality, also necessarily devalued and demystified by the loss of truth, must imitate art, while life must meekly follow the liar [Wilde, "Decay of Lying" 305]" (11). In "The East Wing," the Major and

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[141] The beautiful "Eva of the golden hair" (715) is clearly a reversal of Saki's "golden" boy in "The Music on the Hill" and Saki's other Beautiful Boys, as discussed in Chapter 1.

Lucien — the latter initially so self-involved that he was unconcerned about the house being on fire — are willing to die for a lie, turning the normal valuing of life/reality as truth on its head. Munro-Saki's confusion and rejection of Saki's well-established authorial persona is satirized by the suicidal unity of the two apparently contrasting characters of Lucien the effeminate dandy and Major Boventry the heterosexual soldier, as the unlikely pair are drawn together and killed by their frankly expressed, perverse attitude towards life vs. art:

> The two men went side by side up the blazing staircase, the slender young figure in the well-fitting dinner-jacket and the thick-set military man in striped pyjamas of an obvious Swan & Edgar pattern. Down in the hall below them stood the woman in her pale wrapper, and the Canon in his wonderful-hued Albanian-work dressing-gown, looking like the arch-priests of some strange religion presiding at a human sacrifice.
>
> As the rescue-party disappeared into the roaring cavern of smoke and flames, the butler came into the hall, bearing with him one of the Raeburns.
>
> "I think I hear the clanging of the fire-engines, ma'am," he announced.
>
> Mrs. Gramplain continued staring at the spot where the two men had disappeared.
>
> "How stupid of me!" she said presently to the Canon. "I've just remembered I sent Eva to Exeter to be cleaned. Those two men have lost their lives for nothing."
>
> "They have certainly lost their lives," said the Canon. (717-18)

Saki's wryly comic attention to the quartet's clothing turns into an oddly respectful passage as he notes that the assembled look like "the arch-priests of some strange religion presiding at a human sacrifice." The dandy's and soldier's shallow values have been set aside for a deep, meaningful sacrifice for the sake of beautiful art, which can outlast a superficial life or meaningless war. In fact, this quiet moment of tragedy is Saki's most self-referential moment. Just like Eva, the persona of Saki, created within and sustained solely by stories like "The East Wing," "has never existed" except within the page and so cannot die. While Munro goes "into nothingness" on the front two years after "The East

Wing" first appears in print, Saki lives on in and was even rejuvenated with the post-Munro publications of previously unseen stories and plays.

Saki then undercuts this quiet moment of tragedy when Mrs. Gramplain realizes that she sent the painting away, but the Canon's statement, taken in isolation from his ensuing suffragette fantasy, suggests that the cause for which Lucien and Major Boventry gave their lives was noble and transcendent. Meanwhile, the romancers Canon Clore and Mrs. Gramplain are left behind and survive their own elaborate delusions to endure a fate worse than death in Saki's world: a return to the humdrum monotony of their day-to-day existence.

Canon Clore's brief fantasies about a suffragette-induced fire stem from his conflicted obsession with "suffragette militancy" (714), a movement he both supports yet has qualms about, leading to Saki's most extensive moral reasoning for being opposed to women's enfranchisement:

> "But at the same time I cannot resist pointing out that the women who are using violent means to wring the vote-right from a reluctant legislature are destroying the value of the very thing for which they are struggling. A vote is of no conceivable consequence to anybody unless it carries with it the implicit understanding that majority-rule is the settled order of the day, and the Militants are actively engaged in demonstrating that any minority armed with a box of matches and a total disregard of consequences can force its opinions and its wishes on an indifferent or hostile community. It is not merely manor houses they are destroying, but the whole fabric of government by ballot box." (715)

Here is, apart from "The Comments of Moung-Ka," Saki's only complex and compelling exploration of whether or not a vocal minority should fight for the concept of majority rule (that is, according to democratic vote), yet, in a gender twist on women's wayward imaginings in "Forewarned" and "The Pond," Canon Clore's conflicted sympathy for the suffragettes is a delusional romance; he seems to see all through the prism of this obsession, feeling a vicarious thrill at the thought that the female agitators for the vote have set the house on fire and thus the conflagration

> "will be instrumental in working a social revolution of the utmost magnitude . . . when it becomes known through the length and breadth of the land that an army officer and a young ornament of the social world have lost their lives in a country-house fire, started by suffragette incendiarism, the conscience of the country will be aroused . . . Over the charred bodies of Major Boventry and Lucien Wattleskeat the banners of progress and enfranchisement will be carried forward to victory . . . England will range herself with Finland and other enlightened countries which have already admitted women to the labours, honours and responsibilities of the polling-booth. In the early hours of this February morning a candle has been lighted——" (718)

Such immediate, romantic historicization of the moment is cut short by the butler's mundane revelation that "'The fire was caused by an over-heated flue, and not by Suffragettes, sir'" (718). The notion that a clergyman should be passionately aroused by the thought of suffragettes' arson is amusingly shocking for Saki's time, but such an extensive exploration of a clergyman's ambivalence towards suffragettes, culminating in an unholy, vicarious delight in the notion of female vote-agitators' violence is unsettling, both in its sustained tragicomedy (Saki usually mocks religion outright in his stories) and its undermining of Saki's typical antagonism towards the suffragette movement. For if the author is so consistently set against a "mappined life" for his protagonists, in which a world of routine is often undone by violence, why does he not sympathize more with women who were trying to shake the foundations of a stagnant franchise through acts of mischief and vandalism? Saki's curious promotion of the clergyman's conflicted view intriguingly complicates the author's earlier, clearer stance on the issue, but it is in the pairing of the Canon's delusions with Mrs. Gramplain's imagined child that Saki fully develops his primary transgressive notion: romance is both a necessary reaction to and a justifiably powerful transformation of life.

For if Mrs. Gramplain did not start the fire, she is certainly not sorry for it. The Canon's suffragette fantasy is brought crashing to earth by the butler, but the servant's news and the approaching peal of fire-engine bells mean, for Mrs. Gramplain, as she says in "her dull level voice . . . [that] 'it will all begin over again now, the old life, the old unsatisfying weariness, the old monotony; nothing will be changed'" (718). More than anything, Mrs. Gramplain — and Saki — wants a rupture in routine, a radical break from the same old quotidian existence. Perhaps there lies the beauty in the deaths of the Major and Lucien, for at least death is a definite change from the life those like Mrs. Gramplain are so tired of. The Canon's rejoinder — "'Except the East wing'" — is no consolation, for that is where Mrs. Gramplain had tried to send the Major and Lucien to their deaths when she was convincing them of her imaginary daughter, and where they went willingly upon discovering her lie. The east wing is where she cannot go — because it is not her place as an upper-class woman to rescue objects from fires, even in her own house — and where her only solace, the painting of her child, was to be lost to her forever (until she remembered it wasn't there). If at first this woman was shown as a dull, Saki-esque wife, who judges others' intelligence but calls herself the stupid one, because she forgot that she had removed the painting, Mrs. Gramplain is soon made the most human, moving story. Her ennui had so overwhelmed her that she was willing to send two men to their death for the sake of her artistic self-delusion, while her chillingly "dull level voice" in which she talks about her monotonous existence suggest a woman who may well have set the fire herself, if only to temporarily relieve — or enliven — her wearisome days. Seen in this light, the story offers an even darker, more perverse conclusion: two people can be sent to their death to shake up a dull life.

Lucien's vision of a beautiful death may be Saki's reinterpretation of Munro's war fervour; the original version of "The East Wing" was written in 1914, when most Edwardians believed a soldier's death to be a noble and gallant sacrifice. One of Munro's reasons for enlisting in the Army for the Great War may have been to break free of the stifling mundanity of everyday civilian life in upper-class London social circles; another may have been to show his machismo and distance himself from rumours of his homosexuality. Thus, in the effeminate Lucien and Major Boventry expressing the martial desire for a beautiful death, perhaps the conflict between the dandy-creating author Saki and the manly soldier Munro is briefly reconciled.

At the same time, Saki is boasting of the beautiful self-sufficiency of his writing and that he, as the author-narrator, will happily die for his beautiful art, this "'outcome of my imagination'." The beautiful works which Saki has written — the only children which Munro/Saki left behind — may not last forever, but the writing and reading of them transcend their creator. While Munro would enlist and go off to die in a war fought for European imperialism, in "The East Wing," Saki suggests that men should only give their life for art, and that only art can enrich and ennoble one's life. The larger, metafictional irony of "The East Wing," then, is that the story itself furthers the life of Saki, whose voice and spirit lives on only through his fiction, while Munro has faded away; thus Munro, in sacrificing himself and Saki for an utterly artless war, left behind those beautiful stories which ensure that our imagined Saki endures.

Canon Clore closes the story with his observation that the east wing is forever changed, as a common setting for Saki's dark comedies of manners, the country house, goes up in smoke, but "The East Wing" also destabilizes the foundations on which the typical Saki story rests, giving the lie to Walter Allen's contention that Saki's short stories "are wholly *sui generis*. It is scarcely possible to speak of development in Saki's art; it remained all of a piece'" (86). Canon Clore's complex musings on suffragettes and the wistful sadness of Mrs. Gramplain's solitude with which Saki and his protagonists evidently sympathize strongly counter Saki's usual anti-suffragette position and his typical unconcern with middle-aged, bourgeois wives. If, with "very few exceptions, Saki celebrates the gentleman whose Anglo-Saxon attitudes are openly misogynistic and anti-semitic" (Stern 289), "The East Wing" stands not only as a remarkable exception, but a fascinating suggestion of the increasingly dark, modern, and absurdist direction Saki's stories may have taken if Hector Hugh Munro had survived the war.

In "The East Wing," Saki takes many of the themes that inform his work — self-satisfied non-heterosexuality subtly favoured over yet pragmatically eclipsed by loveless heterosexual marriage, rebellion against routine, imagination conquering reality — and imbues them with sombre existential undertones. In allowing Mrs. Gramplain's and Canon Clore's fantasies to dominate the narrative — and the former's to end the lives of Lucien and Major Boventry — Saki upends and complicates his usual prioritizing of the indifferent, unattainable self- or same-sexual protagonist over the unhappy wife in "The Music on the Hill," and his typical mockery of religious figures and suffragettes' violence. If the focus on aestheticism and surfaces is reminiscent of Wilde, "The East Wing" metamorphoses the simultaneously serious and funny camp of "Gabriel-Ernest" into absurdity that counterbalances tragedy and comedy. The story anticipates Beckett's disturbingly wry and poignant existentialism, with fractured characters dwelling on the senseless attraction of death amidst the chaotic folly of life. A pseudo-Ionesco sensibility lingers in the story, as characters throw existential questions into dark relief by sacrificing themselves for someone who does not exist, while Mrs. Gramplain concludes the complex reversals, inversions, and paradoxes of the plot with her metafictional comment, "'The irony of it all . . . the tragic irony of it all'" (718). By mixing reality and deceit, and merging the expected routine of a comic farce with a melancholy sense of disintegration, Saki collapses binaries, confounds his readers' expectations, and questions the meaning of his characters' existence, blurring the line between art and life while removing the illusion of agency from his protagonists. Just as the "anarchic and the political, the anger and the boredom, are all active in Wilde's transgressive aesthetic" (Dollimore 310), so Saki employs in the story "the survival strategies of subordination – subterfuge, lying, evasion . . . [as] weapons of attack," while "working obliquely through irony, ambiguity, mimicry, and impersonation" (310), thus constantly questioning the prioritizing of reality over art, life over death, truth over romance/self-delusion, and heterosexual marriage over homosexuality. Such subversions of Edwardian social assumptions are, as Dollimore states, "not just the necessary precondition for the binary's subsequent displacement, but often already [make up] a displacement, if not directly of the binary itself, then certainly of the moral and political norms which cluster dependently around its dominant pole and in part constitute it" (66). "The East Wing," then, more than any other story by Saki, is a darkly perverse reaction to dominant Edwardian social norms, always framed by fantasy: Lucien's fantasy of a beautiful death, Canon Clore's fantasy of a suffragette-caused fire, Mrs. Gramplain's framing fantasy of "'my poor darling Eva. Eva of the golden hair'" (715), and even the author-narrator's fantasy about sacrificing himself for his enduring art. Ultimately, it is this pervasive use of fantasy to combat the monotony of life that marks "The East Wing" as a profoundly rebellious story: "A principal medium of transgressive reinscription is fantasy – but again, not the fantasy of transcendence so much as the inherently perverse, transgressive reordering of fantasy's conventional opposite, the mundane" (Dollimore 324). Within a carefully honed and restrained prose style, Saki's Moëbius-strip tale rages against a mundane, ordered, adult world of convention so numbing that fantasy-fuelled violence, arson, and death are the only sensible ways for characters to alter the anaesthetizing state of things. Saki's work is a story about stories, about reordering the world through fiction, and about the power of change from within; for the fiery, transformative power of dependent dissidence in "The East Wing" primarily burns the reader's expectations, and unsettles the foundations, of Saki's fiction. There are no transformative spaces in this story, only art and death, as two men die for a painting and the East Wing itself is burnt to the ground. Out of the ashes of the East Wing, however, Saki re-emerges as the architect of his own reinvention. For an author-narrator persona who only ever arises from the page, metafiction and metamorphosis can only change the shape, and add to the power and force, of the satirical beast prowling within. Saki is "'the outcome of my imagination'," a voice re-echoed, louder and louder, by its own words, until the identity of "my" recedes and all that is left is a wild imagination and its fantastic expression.

CONCLUSION

I was asked at a lecture in Los Angeles to name the seminal event of the 20th century. Without hesitation I suggested the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand in 1914. Two bullets sparked a war that destroyed all faith in progress and optimism, the hallmarks of the Victorian age, and left in its wake the nihilism and alienation of a century that birthed Hitler, Mao, Stalin and another devastating global conflict that did not fully end until the collapse of the Soviet empire in 1989.

— Wade Davis ("The ticking bomb," *The Globe and Mail*, July 6, 2002)

We are so accustomed to disguise ourselves to others that in the end we become disguised to ourselves.

— François (Duc de la) Rochefoucauld

"you are a work of your own fiction"

— Chris Landreth in *Alter Egos* (2004)

The author-narrator persona of Saki springs from a body of work that spans thirty-five years. Saki first came into being in "Alice in Downing Street," in *The Westminster Gazette*, on July 25, 1900, and, while Saki seems to have last appeared in a newspaper during Munro's lifetime in "The Soldier's Guide to Cinema," in the *22nd Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers' Fortnightly Gazette*, on June 26, 1915, the final appearance of Saki's name in association with a previously unpublished work comes with "The Miracle-Merchant" (provenance unknown), which was first published in a 1934 anthology of plays. Yet these appearances are but the first of countless republications, broadcasts, adaptations, criticisms, discussions, citations, and even imitations of Saki. The author-narrator persona of Saki is continually voiced in the stories, sketches, novels, and plays that have lasted long beyond the Edwardian times in which they were first read. This regenerating corpus reveals much about the personas of Munro and Saki, the masculine anxieties that one man's division into personas could not mask, and the dependent dissidence of satire.

Munro was raised, for much of his childhood, by two aunts whose overbearing strictness may well have caused him to, at least unconsciously, long for a mother he never knew. Munro's colonial policeman father, with whom he travelled in Europe in 1887, 1888, and 1889, studied at home in Heanton from 1889 to 1891, and wintered in Davos in 1892-93, would no doubt have reinforced in his son the ideal of late-Victorian imperial "'manliness', which meant courage, resolution, tenacity, and self-government or 'independence'" (Tosh, "The making of masculinities" 45). Ethel Munro noted that the "Munro clan has always been composed of fighters and writers" (673), and after failing to live up to the legacy of his father in his stint as a policeman in Burma,[142] Munro turned to the solitary writing life of a middle-class bachelor in the city, although he told his sister while on leave in June 1916, five months before his death, "'I could never settle down again to the tameness of London life'" (707). Within a few years of Munro's failed efforts to be an imperial defender or serious historian, Saki emerges, biting the hands that feed by savaging the tameness of the middle- and upper-class worlds of Edwardian England, but, outside the page, Munro moved through those worlds, following the same worn threads and skeins of routine (only — and/or in order — for Saki to unravel them). The essence of Saki's satire is a dependent dissidence that stems from self-rebellion —

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[142] Ethel Munro recalls that her brother told her, upon his convalescent return to England, of

> feeling wretchedly ill, in some hotel, [when] he heard footsteps passing in the corridor and called out. A German, a visitor like himself, and a stranger to Hector, came in and asked what was the matter? Hector told him that he wanted a servant to bring him something to drink; the German stood and argued that it was not his business and he could not attend to sick people, neither should he give a message to any one, and then departed. Of course he may have been mad, or madder than usual. (671-72)

This anecdote reveals Ethel's obvious anti-German sentiments, but if the encounter was as Munro's sister relates it, this snubbing, which could have made a young British imperialist (who likely believed in the kindness and necessity of his overseas mission) associate Germans with selfishness and callousness, may have helped to form Munro-Saki's increasingly bellicose attitudes towards Germans, particularly as expressed in *When William Came*.

the author-narrator's exposure of the Edwardian gentleman's mappined life. Yet Saki's satire may never have been as fierce, concentrated, and scathing as it is, at least until 1913 or so, if Munro had not been so enmeshed in the humdrum fabric of everyday, bourgeois London. The personas of Munro and Saki are inextricably and intricately interwoven, and Saki's aggressive satire is likely, at least in part, a sublimation of Munro's desire to fight for King and country. Saki, as the satirical beast who preys on the boring world of the Edwardians, is in part the attacking warrior,[143] repressed and redirected through literature, whom Munro, as the decorous gentleman who quietly slipped into the status quo of 1899-1914 London, wanted to be. The lines between the rebellious and conventional, between Saki and Munro, become blurred: Munro's and/or Saki's sympathy for the exotic or wild outsider cannot outstrip, ultimately, Munro's allegiance to the select dominion of the British Empire, and if Munro's inclination towards non-heterosexuality is reflected in Saki's celebration of the self- and same-sexual, Saki cannot go so far as to endorse suffragetism, for such support for militant females would utterly undermine Munro's belief in Englishmen's duty to defend their patriarchal nation-state. The regiment that Munro joined even reflected his attempt to live up to a patrilineal imperial manhood: "King Edward's Horse . . . drew largely on the overseas dominions, appropriate for a man whose family had served the crown in India and Burma" (Langguth 252).

The lives of Munro and Saki reveal, then, not only the Self and the Other, the Human and Beast, but the Self *as* Other, and the Other *as* Self, the Human as Beast and Beast as Human. However complex Hector Hugh Munro may have been before 1900, with the publicly expressed emergence of Saki, he became at least two distinct personas. Saki is truly an *alter ego*, an Other Self, and Munro was yet another Self. Such a division into personas is an attempt at a radical separation of Self and Other when faced, for instance, with a deep disappointment with oneself or a lingering disaffection with or alienation from the state of society. Munro's disgust with some of his fellow countrymen's lack of patriotism and manly, fighting spirit is obvious in Munro-Saki's *When William Came* (which Munro sent to Boer War veteran commander Lord Roberts for endorsement; see Letter #30) and "An Old Love" — though such disgust, I argue, concealed his regret that he had not yet been able to live up to his patrimonial imperial duty — and Munro's eagerness to fight in World War I meant the abandonment of Saki, an attempt to "expunge half his life" (Langguth 252), and Munro's re-taking of the bayonet that, perhaps, Saki had inadequately replaced with a pen for the last fourteen years (see Rothay Reynolds' apt dedication, qtd. Langguth 269). A rabidly patriotic Munro's enlistment and disposal of Saki marked a permanent reintegration, temporary reconciliation, or extreme disavowal of two conflicted parts of Hector Hugh Munro, and a "tracking-back of the 'other' into the 'same'" (Dollimore 33), the acceptable and conventional.

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[143] Pan, so important to a number of Saki's more sexually dissident stories, was also connected with the military, as he was said to inspire panic among soldiers.

For the creation of Saki marks a split in much the way Freud describes it in "An Outline of Psycho-Analysis," a 1938 essay: "Two psychical attitudes have been formed instead of a single one—one, the normal one, which takes account of reality, and another which under the influence of the instincts detaches the ego from reality. The two exist alongside of each other" (202). Melanie Klein, in a 1929 paper, "Personification in the Play of Children," notes that "these mechanisms (splitting-up and projection) are a principal factor in the tendency to personification in play" (205). Klein's comments on the paranoiac relate, in a small degree, to Saki's stories of imaginative underdog vs. domineering authority and the metamorphosis of Munro's battleaxe aunts into the strict, life-sapping guardian figures of Saki's fiction: the "paranoiac possesses . . . a rich phantasy-life, but the fact that in the structure of his super-ego the cruel, anxiety-inspiring identifications predominate, causes the types he invents to be pre-eminently negative and susceptible only of reduction to the rigid types of persecutor and persecuted" (208).[144] Throughout this dissertation, I have shown how Saki goes against societal norms (heteronormative, anti-Semitic, xenophobic), only to, particularly as Munro-Saki, back-track on such rebellious attitudes by embracing conventional values. Saki's dependent dissidence involved the sort of "perverse dynamic" that, as Dollimore explains,

> denotes certain instabilities and contradictions within dominant structures which exist by virtue of exactly what those structures simultaneously contain and exclude. The displacements which constitute certain repressive discriminations are partly enabled via a proximity which, though disavowed, remains to enable a perverse return, an undoing, a transformation. (33)

The author-narrator persona, Saki, is both a result of a split within Hector Hugh Munro and a literary expression of many conflicted and suppressed unconscious feelings (in voicing Hector Hugh Munro's anxieties and neuroses, Saki may well have contained and redirected many of Hector Hugh Munro's frustrations — within stories of aggression and triumph — which may otherwise have become violent or needed a violent outlet, such as war). Alfred Adler presaged Freud's notions of the id, ego, and superego in "The Aggressive Drive in Life and in Neurosis" (1908) and later works, where he suggests a "cultural-medical model of neurotic conflict" (Stepansky 55), "the feeling of inferiority and the striving for recognition" (Adler 69), and psychological reasons for masculine aggression, and Adler began to link such ideas to gender constructions in "Defiance and Obedience" (1910; see Stepansky 68-70). Adler writes of men's and women's "division of labor" and notes, in a book first translated into English in 1927, that "our institutions, our traditional attitudes, our laws, our morals, our customs, give evidence of the fact that they are determined and maintained by privileged males for the glory of male domination" (Adler 123). A boy quickly realizes the privilege of being male and "his desire for power and superiority is indisputably connected and identified with the duty to be masculine. For many children who desire power it is not sufficient to be simply aware of their masculinity; they must show a proof that they are men, and therefore they must have privileges" (127). Saki's stories reflect Munro's efforts to imaginatively establish his manliness, as boys and young men in Saki's fiction employ "either stubbornness and wild insurgency, or craft and cunning, to gain their ends" (127). Suffragettes' militant striving for equal voting rights doubly emphasized their attempt to be manly, in Munro's and Saki's eyes, and thus their threat to male privilege, a constant ideal:

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[144] In "A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States" (1935), Klein discusses the ego's "processes of expulsion and projection" in its attempts "to defend itself against internalized persecutors" (262); the paper, though it deals with infants, offers some clues about one important aim of Hector Hugh Munro's expressed split into personas. In Saki's fiction, there are various "anxiety-contents and defence-mechanisms" which are controlled, contained, and transmuted through the vicarious championing of those figures — "evil beasts, etc." — which usually scare the child psyche (263). In other words, Saki identifies with children and animals in order to reimagine and reorder Munro's childhood so that the freedom- and soul-stifling authority figures in his life are retroactively defeated. The ultimate unconscious aim of such a process, as carried out by Munro's other self, may be to reconnect with or reconcile Munro's psyche to his mother or the loss of his mother: "Ambivalence, carried out in the splitting of the imagos, enables the young child to gain more trust and belief in its real objects and thus in its internalized ones—to love them more and to carry out in an increasing degree its phantasies of restoration of the loved object" (287).

> Since every human being is measured according to the standard of the privileged male, it is no wonder that one always holds this standard before a boy. Finally he measures himself according to it, observing and asking whether his activities are sufficiently 'masculine,' whether he is 'fully a man.' What we consider 'masculine' nowadays is common knowledge. Above all it is something purely egoistic, something which satisfies self-love, gives a feeling of superiority and domination over others, all with the aid of seemingly 'active' characteristics such as courage, strength, duty, the winning of all manner of victories, especially

> those over women, the acquisition of positions, honors, titles, and the desire to harden himself against so-called 'feminine' tendencies, and the like. There is a constant battle for personal superiority because it counts as a 'masculine' virtue to be dominant.
>
> In this manner every boy assumes characteristics which he sees in adult men, especially his father. We can trace the ramifications of this artificially nourished delusion of grandeur in the most diverse manifestations of our society. At an early age a boy is urged to secure for himself a reserve of power and privileges. This is what is called 'manliness.' In bad cases it degenerates into the well-known expressions of rudeness and brutality. (128)

John Tosh notes "the stake men have in the masculine prospects of their sons. . . . full masculine status . . . is accomplished by economic or military achievements in the public sphere, often marked by a rite of collective men-only initiation" (*A Man's Place* 3). The pressures of male tradition, particularly in imperial Britain, were considerable: "a man's place in posterity depends on leaving sons behind him who can carry forward his name and lineage. Whether that place in posterity is creditable or not depends on the son's masculine attributes – his manly character and his success in stamping himself upon the world" (3-4).

Most psychoanalytical studies of male aggression are limited, in their relevance to Munro and Saki, by a focus on the mother-child bond; the ambivalent personas of Munro and Saki seem to have been formed, primarily, by the absence of a mother figure, the substitution of strict aunts as female yet masculine authorities, and a military, Empire-defending, patrimonial tradition. The split into Munro and Saki was, in a more minor sense than in which psychoanalysts and others usually use the term, "schizoid," in that the individual experiences both "a rent in his relation with his world and . . . a disruption of his relation with himself" (Laing 15), fissures that develop because of the person's "ontological insecurity" (40), an anxiety about their selfhood and identity which, in Hector Hugh Munro's case, I have argued throughout this dissertation, is informed primarily by a concern with imperial manliness. Saki's stories of the wild besting the tame suggest an imaginative battling against Munro's "dread . . . of the possibility of turning, or being turned, from a live person into a dead thing, into a stone, into a robot, an automaton, without personal autonomy of action, an *it* without subjectivity" (48). Nancy J. Chodorow explains extreme aggression (as a psychosexual drive from within) in terms that relate to Munro's and Saki's desire for and fear of unmanliness, as expressed in both Munro's increasing eagerness to enlist and Saki's fierce, fantastic satire:

> Paranoid-schizoid gender, based projectively on split off images of repudiated women and feminized or boylike men, fuses with paranoid-schizoid splitting of good self and hated bad object. . . . This rigid, projective splitting and expulsion, both of bad objects and bad aspects of gender identity at the same time, seem to involve a disintegrative flooding of self-object boundaries and drives, so that the projected object and threatened aggression not only return in paranoid fantasy but also threaten to meld and fuse with the self. Affects and drives overwhelm the subject and lose their linkage to organized fantasy. (Chodorow 256)

Chodorow notes that, "on a cultural level, there are processes similar to those on the individual level: cultures have identity questions, feel persecuted, symbolize racial-ethnic others in terms of pollution, engage in paranoid projection and splitting, all of which form the ideologies that justify violence and aggression" (250). As this dissertation has shown, Munro, and Munro-Saki, often fell back on the common, circulating prejudices of the day, from anti-pacifist prejudice and misogynistic attacks on suffragettes to anti-Semitic stereotypes and Orientalized, uncivilized Balkan figures.[145] Victorian England was an example of what Elisabeth Young-Bruehl calls "societies in which conditions encourage hysterical splitting, even to the point where social forms and laws for sanctioning double lives develop, providing . . . what the coexistence of marriage and prostitution has been for sexists" (37). In addition to the societal split that allowed men to return home to their angels of the hearth from streets where prostitutes were bought in the hundreds, with some raped or murdered every night — a sort of open blindness mirrored in Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* — within the culture of late-Victorian and Edwardian England, specifically in the wake of the Boer War, there was a growing national anxiety about the dominant ideology of imperial white manhood and the British Empire's status as the pre-eminent colonial power in the world. These two factors, the private/public compartmentalization of middle-class men's lives and the concern about England's manly mettle (a concern heightened after the Boer War and in the face of imperial competition with Germany), were the primary forces behind Saki's dependently dissident satire and its eventual co-opting by a Munro eager to prove his hyper-masculine fighting spirit.

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[145] There is a suggestion, in a clergyman's explanation to Murrey Yeovil in *When William Came*, that Munro wishes to end such scapegoating: "One thing you may be sure of, they do not blame themselves. No true Londoner ever admits that fault lies at his door . . . " (759)

By 1900, the "middle classes were not only more numerous but also better off than ever before, with taxable income in the United Kingdom estimated at more than £600 million "by the early 1890s" and the "number of middle-class persons in the United Kingdom with taxable incomes" numbering "about 850,000 by the mid 1890s" (Sir J. Stamp, *British Incomes and Property* [1922], qtd. Read, *The Age of Urban Democracy* 236). Middle- and upper-class women were still seldom seen as having professional or public lives. As John Tosh points out in *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England*, "the history of men sits even more uncomfortably with the private/public divide. Indeed much of men's power has resided in their privileged freedom to pass at will between the public and private. As a social identity masculinity is constructed in three arenas – home, work and all-male association" (2). While Munro never had a family, he seems to have led a rather solitary, private life as a bachelor (setting up his sister in a cottage in the countryside while he lived in an apartment in the middle of London or went to his club), while any public voice, particularly after 1909, issued forth in a published piece by Saki. The threat that Saki's characters so often defy, and the threat that Munro-Saki, as the alluring escape of war appeared in the 1910s, increasingly railed against, was not so much domesticity as a sort of tameness, life as a rut or mind-numbing routine (which, in some of Saki's stories, could be initiated by marriage and include a humdrum domestic life). Saki's endorsement of bachelors was not out of place at a time when many found "the public undermining of private patriarchy . . . highly unwelcome" and when the "merits of living in domesticity were no longer so clear to [the turn-of-the-century] generation of middle-class men" who, increasingly, "either postponed marriage or else carved out a larger sphere for all-male society" (146). The Edwardian period also saw a post-Wilde culture that was increasingly conflating, as Marc Epprecht notes, "private sexuality with public gender identity. . . . over time the notion became common sense that if a man had sex with a male . . . he was effete by nature and character" (136). Saki not only separates himself from the private world of Munro, but often attacks it or exhorts Munro to break away from the middle-class mould; after all, the private, domestic world of Munro's childhood was clouded by severe, substitute parental figures, a lack of mobility, and a routine dictated by adults, and the public Saki's stories turn around and viciously attack aunts, guardians, stale marriages, male-usurping suffragettes, and any other forces that threaten to extend their iron grips from the domestic sphere and stifle the male frontiers of professional, military, imperial, or even political adventure.

The "separation of home from work" in the West began, in large part, in 1880s England, as "[b]ourgeois men were increasingly disturbed by the identification of the home with the feminine, represented as the 'tyranny of five-o'clock tea'" (recall Saki's "Tea"; Kipling's 1890 novel *The Light That Failed* suggests that "the effeminate aesthete" would agree to tea at five [*A Man's Place* 181]), and "the old association of masculinity with adventure resurfaced in the era of high imperialism after 1880" (7). By the 1880s, "disillusionment with domesticity and the hankering after a bracing men-only world were what attracted many to careers overseas" (176), and the "Edwardian period saw a continuation of the late Victorian pattern. Both the allure of the empire as a men-only sphere and the male backlash against women's rights intensified, and they were reflected in the most successful reassertion of manly values at this time, the Boy Scouts" (197), that last great hope so exalted by Munro-Saki in *When William Came*. For "those who had been to public school there was the sense of an almost seamless continuum of all-male institutions, where the emotional and material demands of women could be evaded indefinitely. The empire beckoned as the most unequivocal means of realizing the fantasy of a manly life free from feminine constraint" (193-94), a fantasy that Munro had known for just over a year in Burma, and at times while a European correspondent, that Saki metamorphosed into a deeply ambivalent fictional world of established prejudices and outsider dissidence, and that Munro avidly wished to return to in 1914. As I argue in Chapter 3, for instance, Munro and, often, Saki imagined the Balkans as a wild land of adventure, and, thanks in small part to Munro's reports and Saki's tales, "Balkanism became, in time, a convenient substitute for the emotional discharge that orientalism provided, exempting the West from charges of racism, colonialism, eurocentrism, and

Christian intolerance against Islam . . . the externalization of frustrations on them can circumvent the usual racial or religious bias allegations" (Todorova 188). Munro used the Balkans and Russia as imagined wildernesses on which to project his frustrated desire for imperial adventure, and even since Edwardian times,

> the modern tradition of British adventure has furnished idealized, wish-fulfilling forms of masculinity to counter anxieties generated in a social world that is deeply divided along the fracture-lines of ethnicity and nation, gender and class . . . soldier heroes . . . being ideally powerful and free from contradictions, function psychically and socially as positive imagos to set against the fragmenting and undermining effects of anxiety. They offer the psychic reassurance of triumph over the sources of threat, promising the defeat of enemies and the recovery of that which is valued and feared lost. . . . Identification with these heroes meets the wish to fix one's own place within the social world, to feel oneself to be coherent and powerful rather than fragmented and contradictory. It offers the assurance of a clearly recognizable gender identity and, through this, the security of belonging to a gendered national collectivity that imagines itself to be superior in strength and virtue to others. (Dawson 282)

The war between British troops and the Afrikaaners (of Dutch, French Huguenot and German descent) in South Africa bookended the turn of the century and, when it ended in May 1902, after the British side had engaged around 450,000 men against 60,000 Boers, nearly 21,000 imperial soldiers had died in battle or from disease, while the Boer side had lost 4,000 men (and thousands of women and children in British concentration camps) in a war that "cost the British over £200 million" (Read, *The Age of Urban Democracy* 356). The eventual victory of the British, in the face of poor military leadership and the Boers' guerrilla tactics, was celebrated with "perhaps an expression of relief rather than of vainglory" (357). Kipling cautioned that the Empire must learn from the mistakes in South Africa in "The Lesson" (*The Times*, July 29, 1901). Saki, in many of his early verse satires for *The Westminster Gazette*, mocks the government's and military's failing strategies in South Africa (see "Introduction to The Westminster Alice,"

"Alice in Pall Mall," "Alice and the Liberal Party," and "Alice Lunches at Westminster"). England's "imperial assurance had been shaken by the size of the effort needed to defeat the Boers" (358); Paula Krebs writes of the manufacturing of supposedly wide-spread jingoistic public opinion of the war by the emerging "sensational journalism" — in fact, according to his wife's diary, Rudyard Kipling had to rouse his Rottingdean neighbours to celebrate victory on what became known as Mafeking Night (6).

Munro's awareness of Darwinian theory, as noted by Frost (see, for instance, *Saki: His Context and Development* 32-38), and Saki's stories, so concerned with nature, red in tooth and claw (even in Saki's rather different "characterization of sex as the beast within every man" [Tosh, *A Man's Place* 46]), suggest that Munro and Saki would have known of social Darwinists' concern with the increasing numbers of supposedly unfit (often lower-class) people in the country leading to the rapid dilution of Britain's imperial force in the world. Popular concerns about degeneracy "bore little relation to reality, but represented a moral panic in which the middle classes expressed their fear of the future, of the masses and of urban life in general. In the end it was war in South Africa which brought home the real extent of social deprivation and its dire consequence for nation and empire" (Rutherford 54). Towards the turn of the century, articles and reports on the "'Decay of Bodily Strength in Towns'" or the poor health of military recruits appeared in newspapers (Read, *The Age of Urban Democracy* 288). By the first decade of the new century, most "Edwardians had accepted that Britain could no longer lead the way in many branches of industy [sic]" (385). The "fear of irreversible physical and moral degeneration caused by urban living . . . was widely shared and discussed" in the Edwardian years, and many wondered, "Was the poor performance of the British army in the Boer War a reflection of racial decay?" (400-01) Balfour's government even set up an "Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration" that, during its tenure from 1903-04, discovered many of the horrible conditions in which working-class Edwardians were living (401). In Edwardian England, the Boer War had "put an end to the wilder expressions of late-Victorian imperialism"; the empire's very "progress – even its ultimate survival – became a subject of sober concern" (466), and

> there were many Britons for whom it was more a cause of worry than of satisfaction. These included, natuarally [sic], people who were opposed to the Empire on moral grounds, of whom there were a sizeable number at that time. But it also included some of the most enthusiastic imperialists of the day, whose attitude towards their Empire was one of foreboding and fear. This foreboding and fear were, in fact, characteristic Edwardian imperial attitudes. (Porter 129)

While the public schools like those Munro attended for a time during his childhood had been reservoirs of future imperial officers and military men, the confidence-shaking experience of the war in South Africa led not only to the formation of the Boy Scouts by one of the heroes of the battle of Māfeking, Baden-Powell, but to an even greater push to instill values of imperial manliness in schoolboys:

> partly out of concern for Britain's military prowess after the humiliating and unexpected human cost of the Boer War, there was a well-orchestrated campaign to instill military aspirations in the minds of young Englishmen with a view to building up territorial reserves. Where periodicals pedalled myths and filled the imaginations of schoolboys with images of the glory rather than the gore of war, veterans from the Boer War toured schools to drum up enthusiasm for the military life. As war heroes with stories to tell, they too contributed to the misleading idea of war as adventure. The common objective was to take the raw material of a mass of schoolboys and shape it into a new generation of soldiers who would willingly lay down their lives for their country. Special attention was paid to the public schools in recruitment initiatives. (Berridge 40-1)

Arnold White, in *Efficiency and Empire* (1901), argued that the English family built character, men who were "'learning the world mainly through books . . . can never become real men'," and that the "Boer War had forcibly brought home the message of faltering will and declining efficiency," not to mention the issues of "inept ministerial leadership, Jewish infiltration into 'bad smart society,' 'softening of fibre of rulers and ruled' . . . enthusiasm, mass distraction, middle-class snobbery, and treacherous intellectualism" (Field 70). For White and others, the "right line of action that subsumed all others was commitment to empire" (76). As Tosh notes, the

> ascription of specific national problems to a general failure of will and a weakening of backbone speaks the language of gender crisis. When men grow soft, the body politic disintegrates. Similar responses were sparked by the physical unpreparedness of British manhood for the Boer War. And, like the lax management of children, craven concessions to women and the canker of homosexuality were both seized on as part metaphor, part cause, of the unsettled face of public life. The fin de siecle is now in fact commonly seen as a period of crisis in masculinity, when evidence from many different directions seemed to confirm that men were under threat and losing control of themselves and others. The consequence was a growth of irrational and paranoid responses in both society and culture. (Tosh, "The Making of Masculinities" 55)

Munro, as increasingly evidenced by Munro-Saki's *When William Came*, "An Old Love," and Munro's August 4 letter to the *Morning Post*, wanted desperately, even at the decidedly non-battle-hardy age of forty-three, to show his commitment to the British Empire, anticipating the country's constant exhortation, with World War I, to defend a Britain wedded to its empire (Braudy 378). If manliness is often "the opposite of childishness and sometimes of beastliness" (Vance 8), the fierce children and beasts of Saki's fiction (which can also be seen as exposures of society as basically primal, bloody-minded, and battle-thirsty) are the inverted, redirected expressions of the fierce manliness that Munro wished to prove, a manliness that, in some ways, was also a return to boyhood and being the son who carries on his father's legacy.[146] Ethel Munro quotes a

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[146] Frost (*Saki: His Context and Development* 125) quotes an apt excerpt from Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morality* (Cambridge UP, 1994; p. 25):

March 15, 1915 letter from her brother in which he writes of his time in Sussex, training for the front, as "like being boy and man at the same time" (701), and Munro's appeal to boys' war games in "An Old Love" and a poem that Langguth found on a scrap of paper — "Throw out a voice to kingly boys / to call them to t[he] fight / t[o] t[ha]t comfortness of unsuccess / that bids to dead goodnight" (Notes, 352) — suggest that, for Munro, becoming a soldier meant the reconciliation of naturally aggressive boyishness and imperial manliness.

As the relatively peaceful years of nineteenth-century Europe ebbed to a close, the "1890s and early 1900s were thus rife with the belief that war would supremely distill masculine identity in ways impossible in a peacetime world" (Braudy 373). Braudy argues that "the talk of degeneracy, of purging the 'unmanly,' of restoring the purity of national bloodlines, was thus part of a public retribalizing across Europe and America that stressed the invention or the renewal of rituals of masculinity" and that, just as Munro seemed to see his efforts as a soldier as making up for the humdrum life that Saki so often mocks in his fiction, "war was the ultimate ordeal . . . it would replace the petty traps and evasions of normal society with the absolutes of life and death, honor and cowardice, individual interest and the welfare of the group" (374). Munro may have believed, too, that war in the name of nationalism was a pure cause and ideal alternative to the England of blind churchgoers and "shop-keepers" ("Potted Parliament," *The Outlook*, August 8, 1914; see Footnote 75) that Saki so often derided. Gradually, since the Napoleonic wars, the image of the soldier had become associated with "Honor,

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> [The good men] enjoy freedom from every social constraint, in the wilderness they compensate for the tension which is caused by being closed in and fenced in by the peace of the community for so long, they *return* to the innocent conscience of the wild beast, as exultant monsters, who perhaps go away having committed a hideous succession of murder, arson, rape and torture, in a mood of bravado and spiritual equilibrium as though they had simply played a student's prank . . .

integrity, patriotism, and a rough-hewn wisdom" (376). More generally, the type of military masculinity that Munro welcomed when he signed up to fight in 1914 tapped into a larger "form of masculine identity (hegemonic masculinity) that boys and men are generally encouraged to aspire to . . . characterized by the interrelationship of stoicism, phallocentricity and the domination of weaker individuals, competitiveness and heroic achievement" (Hopton 112). Specifically, for Munro, joining the ranks meant rejoining the ranks of his father's imperial legacy and asserting his manliness, paradoxically, by immersing himself in an exclusively male world:

> Men's groups, teams, clubs, military units, and so forth allow their members safe homoeroticism if they can be demarcated clearly from homosexual groups . . . Psychologically, what the same-sex peer groups give their members might be called genital supplementing. Men feel their sexual potency, their phallic power, augmented when they are with buddies; more than one penis is necessary to men whose ambitions are large but whose self-esteem is not secured inwardly. They expand, so to speak, to be the equals of their fathers. (Young-Bruehl 158)

The split between private Munro and public Saki was both a defensive response to Munro's failure to live up to a patrimonial, imperial manhood and a reflection of the splits between tame home life and professional work or patriotic duty at a time when national masculinity seemed to be threatened by the dandy, the New Woman, the suffragette, and even racial Others. Saki's reactions to the tameness of conventional middle-class life often endorse the dandy, New Woman, or racial Other as much they turn against them, but with the approach of war, Munro-Saki co-opted and erased the ambiguity of Saki's dissidence, turning it into a shrill, jingoistic call for hyper-masculine, military imperialism. By 1913, Munro was declawing Saki and this confused Munro-Saki would turn his back on Saki's unorthodox masculinity-endorsing fiction in an anxious effort to pre-empt any conflation of his private sexuality and public gender identity by embracing a virile, empire-defending manliness. With Munro's enlistment and the disappearance of Saki, Hector Hugh Munro's inner tensions, as exacerbated by social and political conflicts, were, if not reconciled, given full vent in a brutal war that saw many Englishmen turn away from the perceived fetters of mundane home lives:

> As defensive strategies of containment, the split forms of modern British adventure are an historically specific response to social contradictions and psychic anxieties that developed in the course of the nineteenth century. The first was the new centrality of Empire to the imagining of British national identity. The triumphalist narratives of nineteenth-century soldier heroes like Havelock were underpinned by the deployment of modern imperial power to subjugate and dominate colonial territories and colonized peoples. But they were also, crucially, the products of phantasies in which the values of 'Britishness' were felt to be under threat of loss and destruction. The heroic national masculinity required to counter this threat came to be secured through the gendered splitting in cultural imaginaries along the public-private divide. In this second decisive relation, the qualities and achievements of the adventure hero became separated from, and defined against, the concerns and values of the domestic sphere: the locus of the genders. (Dawson 283)

While Saki's stories are wryly satirical, this analysis of Saki's fiction is a story of satire gone awry. If works of satire, theoretically the most dissenting and critical form of humour, are too often framed by dominant social prejudices — in the case of Munro/Saki's Edwardian England, these ranged from anti-Semitism and militant patriotism to misogyny and homophobia, all of which obviously remain in varying degrees today — then such dependence undermines satire's imagined rebellions. In Chapter 1, I showed how Saki's dependent dissidence manifests itself as campy dissent that is anxiously countered by Munro-Saki's embrace of a military, patriotic masculinity. In Chapter 2, I explored Saki's ambivalence towards women, who are often shown as independent masculinity-stifling promoters and enablers of heterosexual society or military men-threatening agitators for the vote, but sometimes shown as more subdued prankster figures or as complex women. In Chapter 3, I examined how Saki's brief subversion and satire of anti-Semitism is surrounded by conventional anti-Semitic stereotypes and, in Saki's vision of Eastern Europe, there is a perpetual vacillation between anti-Slavic sentiment and more complex portrayals of Russia and the Balkans. In Chapter 4, I traced Saki's complex efforts to undercut the very writing persona and personality, through riffs on his birth-poem, that he is simultaneously establishing with his sly self-mockery, metapoetic and -fictional moments, and intertextual allusions. Munro's co-opting of Saki as the war approached is undercut by another attempt by Saki to metamorphose himself, in "The East Wing," into an absurdist, tragicomic writer who, by blurring the lines between life, art, and death, questions his own supposedly fixed literary identity and style. While Munro may have become a reintegrated whole and no longer needed Saki while serving as a soldier and fulfilling his imperial masculine duty, Munro's co-opting of Saki for jingoistic purposes not only dulled but utterly reversed the latter's anti-establishment satire to the point, in *When William Came*, where it becomes propaganda.

Satire is clearest, most direct, and most effective when it lashes out against dominant systems and prejudices, rather than firing reactionary pot-shots at easy or down-and-out targets. In his casual, sometimes vicious skewering of conventional butts for patriarchal, imperial Edwardian England's scorn — such as pacifists, suffragettes, Jews, and Slavs — Saki falls back on the dominant prejudices of the middle and upper classes whom he so often attacks in his stories. Saki's refusal to recognize that he is both a part of and beholden to the society he mocks, in combination with Munro's co-opting, undoes much of his satire.

More than a century later, however, Western society remains a patriarchal (in politics, entertainment, and sports in particular, men still control most of the power and capital), nationalist, and imperial world where work and life, and product and process, are still compartmentalized, though often in increasingly disputed and troubling ways, while people's lives are as, if not more, dependent on capitalism, in an increasingly globalized economy and homogenized cultural landscape. The supposed split between work and home, for instance, to which so many 9-to-5ers and commuters subscribe, allows people to think of themselves as separate from the economic system and somehow able to escape from the political, economic, and social issues by going home and turning on the TV or surfing the Internet. The personal is not, then, professional and certainly not political. People can scoff at politicians and celebrities or tut-tut at foreign wars or coups while telling themselves that they are in no way part of a system that upholds such figures or causes such overseas events. Alert, self-critical satire should break down such self-imposed walls and hold satirist, satirized, and audience accountable. Yet Saki's kind of problematic, un-self-conscious dependent dissidence remains strikingly evident today in TV shows, films, and other media that, perhaps in part because of the still-rigid split in patriarchal Western societies between work and home, public and private, and professional and personal, frequently fall back on conveniently simple, black-and-white, conventional stereotypes.

Saki's own satire is often (though I offer some notable exceptions throughout this dissertation) not conscious of Munro's basically privileged position in and exalted dependency — as a white bourgeois male — on his society. Saki often seems aloof and detached from the world that is being attacked, as though he is not a part of it, and the sympathetic reader need not be either. Saki's most successful, complex, and dissident stories, far from suggesting such a split from the world, counterbalance and juxtapose mainstream sensibilities with dissenting attitudes, simultaneously comforting and unsettling the reader. As Boyle explains, "the author of satire constructs a mask that engages us. The mask must be ridiculous enough to disarm us with laughter and enough like us to be recognizable upon reflection. And in such recognition is shame, indignation, and . . . the mortifying levity of the human condition itself" (11-12). In "Gabriel-Ernest," "The Unrest-Cure," and "The East Wing," for instance, Saki counterpoises the decorous and the risqué, the rustic and the barbarous, and the tragic and the absurd. Yet these stories seem, particularly by the end of Saki's oeuvre, outweighed by a shift to establishment values. If, as Nietzsche wrote, "Every profound spirit needs a mask" (56), such spirits often don masks in order to conceal profound rifts deep within. The persona of Saki seems to have arisen as a means for Hector Hugh Munro to deal with his masculine imperialist failure, and so the fiction that results is always, in large part, a metamorphosis of Munro's failed defence of the establishment into Saki's attacks on the establishment. With the war, however, Munro may no longer have needed Saki's increasingly ambiguous rebelliousness, as he found himself wholly embracing a hyper-masculinity in the trenches. Or perhaps Munro's duties as a soldier proved to be an excessive overcompensation for a long-conflicted masculinity, where he felt torn between a manly imperial patrimony and his personal, non-heterosexual passions. Whatever the complex truth, Munro's co-opting of Saki, his dilution of style and dulling of satire in *When William Came*, and Saki's intermittent flashes of conventional, even reactionary, ideas show that Munro's and Saki's personas, which often overlapped and conflicted, were not facets of a well-integrated, decidedly self-aware Hector Hugh Munro but manifestations of a troubled individual trying to assert himself in a schizoid society slowly foundering after striking the cleft rock of imperial masculinity.

Throughout his fiction, Saki excoriates and temporarily disrupts a world in which Munro was raised, educated, and living, and thus could never escape. As Stern notes, "Saki's obsession with adversarial plots may be seen to reflect the embattled stance of an epigrammatist writing in the wake of Wilde: no victory seems permanent, and so the struggle must be rehearsed again and again" (287). In this way, at least, Saki's dissidence may be brutally honest, suggesting that any rebellion in our restrictive, hegemonic modern world can only be fiercely short-lived. Perhaps, too, Saki foresees that he will eventually be eclipsed by the status quo that Munro so desperately wanted to defend. In November 1916, then, Hector Hugh Munro ceased to be while the fiction of Saki lives on, but the shadow of Munro falls over that fiction, altering the tone and mood of much of the satirist's oeuvre. At a time when another hulking empire looms over the globe and the hulking, jittery shadow of imperial masculinity falls across our society still, the flawed but fascinating dependent dissidence of Saki offers a resonant cautionary tale beneath stories of fierce, rebellious charm.

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APPENDIX ONE

"Dogged" by "H. H. M." (1899)

This tale, the first published story by a Munro/Saki persona (it has only been reprinted once, to my knowledge, in the Everyman Saki anthology *Short Stories 2*, edited by Peter Haining), appeared in *St. Paul's*, a magazine that mainly dealt with live entertainment in London, on February 18, 1899, during Munro's period of research for *The Rise of the Russian Empire* in the British Museum Reading Room. Signed only "H. H. M.," perhaps "to protect his impending scholarly renown" (Langguth 52), "Dogged" is a curious story. Peter Haining notes that "it is a little laboured and facetious" but maintains that "there are several elements in it which were later to become Saki's favourite themes" (ix), from the timidity and dullness exhibited by Artemus Gibbon to his domination by a tyrannical female figure. The story's central, humorous disruption of a settled existence by Fate and Nature is the basic conceit for many a twisting Saki tale. "Dogged" also presages Saki's dandy stories with Beelzebub, a "rakish" canine that devilishly turns his owner's room and soon his life into one of "Bohemian extravagance." The hapless non-hero's primate surname also recalls Edward Gibbon, author of *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, which likely influenced Munro's attempt at a Russian history. "Artemus," Nooshin Elahipanah explains in "Saki's Engagement with Evolution, Naturalism, and Determinism," is a variation on "Arthemius," the name of a jailer converted by his prisoners Saint Marcellinus and Peter circa 304; here, Artemus is harried, imprisoned, and changed by the pet that he is supposed to control and contain (an idea revisited in Saki's "The Remoulding of Groby Lington," written in or before 1911). Elahipanah argues that this story about Fate and Nemesis is "a parody of religious determinism" (seeing the women as Eve figures who "trick Gibbon into sin") that not only denies humans' superiority to animals but gives the lie to the idea of evolution as progressive and shows how people, beholden to their environment, lack free will.

There are, however, considerable differences in both style and content between this story and Saki's fiction, particularly those post-Reginald stories that would appear ten years later. As Langguth notes, the story features a heterosexual kiss, never seen in Saki's fiction (53). "Dogged" is more of a comedy of manners than Saki's work. The writing is not only rougher and wordier, lacking the later distillation, punchiness, and easy flow of Saki's stories (likely honed by Munro's journalism), but seems antiquated at times, with such words as "damsel" and "dog-flesh." In places, the author seems influenced by the long comic sentences and bumbling characters of Dickens: "While Gibbon was delivering himself of this charge he was shoving a warm, moist shilling Mary-wards along the table with a succession of short pats, as if he thought the coin should have some impetus of its own, and start forward in the desired direction." Although "H. H. M." is writing about a repressed man, the narrative tone seems to carry a whiff of sexlessness and detachment in the descriptions of women, from Artemus' sweetheart "Hilary Helforlether" as a "sometime disciple" to the boa-wearing woman's "screamlet." There is more exposition and incident than witty dialogue or clever plot turns in this one and only story by "H. H. M.," but "Dogged" remains a fascinating map of various narrative paths that would be abandoned or rerouted by Saki years later.

Dogged

Artemus Gibbon was, by nature and inclination, blameless and respectable, and under happier circumstances the record of his life might have preserved the albino tint of its early promise; but he was of timid and yielding disposition, and had been carefully brought up, so that his case was clearly hopeless from the first. It only remained for the strong and unscrupulous character to come alongside, and the result was a foregone conclusion. And one afternoon it came. It is a well-tried axiom that, in human affairs, as in steeplechasing, the ugliest croppers occur at the 'safest' and most carefully pruned places, and of all conceivable occasions for a young man to go irretrievably wrong, a Church bazaar would seem to offer the least appropriate opportunity. Yet it was at such a function, opened by a bishop's lady, and patronized by the most hopelessly correct people in the neighbourhood, that Artemus Gibbon went unsuspectingly to his undoing.

In the first place it must be admitted that his natural timidity was played upon by the embarrassing absence of anything at the bazaar which a bachelor of prosaic tastes might reasonably be expected to purchase with any approach to hearty conviction that his money was profitably laid out. Baby linen, which seemed to be the staple article on most of the stalls, was not to be thought of for a moment and the innate modesty of his taste in dress caused him to recoil from the 'Jubilee Memento Scarves', handworked with the Royal arms in a delirium of crimson and gold. Hence, when he had purchased a harmless and unnecessary pincushion and two views of Durham Cathedral, he felt that he might, without odium, effect a dexterous retreat. Here it was that the Foreseen and Inevitable stepped in and changed the placid current of his life. He was pounced upon by a severe-looking dame, with an air of one being in authority, who gave him to understand that it was required of him that he should buy a dog.

"Only two guineas; my niece has charge of him over there. Clara!" Gibbon found himself a moment later confronted by a vivacious damsel – and the dog. The possibility of admitting a canine companion within the narrow compass of his establishment had not been altogether foreign to his speculations on life; a quiet, meek-eyed spaniel for instance, which would occupy an unobtrusive position by his domestic hearth, or participate in his constitutional walks, or, in later days, perhaps, a dignified deer-hound with a tendency to statuesque repose – such were the shapes which his occasional ruminations on the subject had taken. But the dog now before him was by no means built according to these patterns. A rakish-looking fox-terrier, stamped with the hall-mark of naked and unashamed depravity, and wearing the yawningly alert air of one who has found the world is vain and likes it all the better for it, such was the specimen of dog-flesh at which Mr Artemus Gibbon found himself gazing in blank dismay.

Before he had quite realized the full force of the cataclysm in which he was involved, he had parted with the demanded forty-two shillings, and learned from the vivacious damsel the appalling fact that his new purchase was named Beelzebub. Something instinctively told him that he had parted too with his peace of mind, and as he was towed out of the bazaar premises in the wake of a yelping and plunging terrier, with an accompaniment of noise and publicity uncongenial to his natural modesty, he was dimly aware that he had started on a downgrade path that led to no good and peaceful end. To the ordinary intellect his position might not have appeared irretrievable; the dog which he had been rushed into buying, and whose personality inspired him with the strongest repugnance, was not necessarily a fixture. An immediate purchaser might be discovered, or the undesired acquisition might be given away, lost, or otherwise disposed of.

But here again the working of inexorable laws sterilized the chances of Gibbon's emancipation. In a conflict between their respective will-powers, the man inevitably succumbed to the fox-terrier, and, when the dinner-hour exposed the bachelor's sitting-room to the observation of a tray-bearing handmaiden, its occupant was discovered in a condition of deprecatory embarrassment; whilst the dog, snugly ensconced in the only arm-chair, was the embodiment of self-composure and critical appraisement. As was a general rule, Gibbon was not demonstratively communicative with maidservants, and his intercourse in this direction was usually limited to a perfunctory (vocal) salutation, or a mild request for a forgotten napkin, or such-like trifle. But the advent of Beelzebub had already dislocated the wonted disposition of affairs, and the girl became aware that an appeal of some nature was being addressed to her.

"Er, Mary, this little dog, er, I think you – might say nothing about it to Mrs Mulberry, er, just yet, that is, I will break it to her – I mean – will tell her myself – tomorrow morning." While Gibbon was delivering himself of this charge he was shoving a warm, moist shilling Mary-wards along the table with a succession of short pats, as if he thought the coin should have some impetus of its own, and start forward in the desired direction. The hush-money staved off the crisis which must assuredly arise when the landlady became aware of the canine presence in her apartments, and Gibbon, having successfully smuggled the contraband article into his bedroom, congratulated himself on having so far made the best of the situation. But, as the dog slipped out next morning on the incoming of the hot water, and chivvied the landlady's cat into the landlady's bedroom, and followed it on to her bed and under the blankets, where a muffled but vigorous battle-royal ensued, it became doubtful whether the shilling had been, after all, a judicious outlay.

Gibbon found his selection of new rooms was considerably narrowed by the prejudice aroused in the breasts of prospective landladies on the sight of his canine satellite, who accompanied him as a matter of course on all his quests; and finally, having strayed into a suite of chambers furnished in a style of Bohemian extravagance which was wholly out of keeping with his accustomed ways of life, the terrier clinched matters for him by settling down therein and refusing to leave. Gibbon hunted him ineffectually round the place, upset and disarranged the furniture, all to no purpose; and at length, on the suggestion of the proprietor – "you'd better take the rooms, sir, seems as if it was meant like" – he took alarm at the idea of resisting the possible workings of a Higher Power, and yielded. It was the weak character pitted against the strong once more, and the result was ever as it must be.

To the deteriorating effects of baneful companionship were now added the subtle workings of the laws of environment. Gibbon was too bashfully diffident to remove even the most glaringly uncongenial adornments of his new quarters, and it was a sign of his drifting progress that the views of Durham Cathedral did not find hanging room on the well-covered walls. Instead of these solidly respectable works of art, his eyes were daily confronted with presentiments of ladies who had apparently conquered the love of dress which is attributed to their sex, interspersed with portraits of race-horses noted for their fastness, or of society beauties with a similar reputation. But the chief agent in the moral slump which was becoming more and more pronounced in the person of Artemus Gibbon was Beelzebub. The very name was a stumbling-block to the leading of a respectable life, and a young man who called an already sufficiently unprepossessing animal by such an unseemly appellation was doomed to be dropped by self-respecting acquaintances.

Then with change of friends also came change of habits. Sober constitutionals became a thing of the past since Beelzebub, speedily bored by such tame affairs, contracted a habit of jumping into the nearest empty hansom; the cabman naturally pulled up, and as the dog would not get out, Gibbon had to get in. Having no address that he could give at the moment – it usually happened a few yards from his own door – a restaurant became the necessary destination, and Beelzebub never left much before closing time. The eye of the waiter, scornfully regarding his slowly emptied glass of lager, invariably impelled the naturally temperate Gibbon to order another drink, and the homeward cab was sometimes a matter of convenience as well as dictation.

As fast as the fate-driven dissipater alienated old acquaintances, Beelzebub supplied him with new ones of a stamp more congruous with his altered circumstances; smart sporting youths, lurid in waistcoats and conversation, foregathered with the guileless owner of the indiscriminately social terrier, and one by one the landmarks of the placid past were swept away. Awaking in the harsh crude light of mature morning from late and unrefreshing sleep, Artemus would cast his eyes wearily round his disordered rooms, and everywhere the trail of the dog met his gaze, in powdery cigarette ashes, empty liqueur glasses, vivid-hued sporting periodicals, and tumbled packs of cards.

But the finishing touch was yet to come. Sitting one night in a café where he and his dog were now recognized habitués, slowly imbibing the Scotch and soda which had supplanted the lager of his earlier dissipations, Gibbon had momentarily lost himself in that superstructure of woe which consists of 'remembering happier things'; in particular he was thinking of a certain prodigally inclined young friend of his pre-canine days, by name Hilary Helforlether, whom he had tried to keep, by the force of example and precept, in the straight and narrow way that leads to a respected old age. From the uncomfortable reflections to which this reverie gave rise, he was suddenly aroused by a screamlet of vexed consternation, and turning sharply beheld at an adjoining table a lady, whose entrance had languidly attracted his attention some quarter of an hour ago. She was young and pretty and birdlike – especially with regard to her hair, which was of the tint a Norwich canary aspires to but seldom attains – and there was just a delicate flavour of a possible foreign extraction about her; her attire was a rhapsody (with lucid intervals) of purple and gold, and a magnificent boa of ostrich feather had supplied the finishing touch to an impressive costume. The soft shimmering lengths of this elegant accessory had attracted the attention of the ever-alert Beelzebub, who had quietly abstracted it as it hung negligently from its owner's chair, and by a process of 'little and often' had conscientiously given to each individual feather a separate and independent existence.

Gibbon's horrified gaze, attracted by the lady's excusable agitation, rested on his graceless quadruped snoozing amid the ruin of fluffiness like an eider-duckling in its nest. 'No marvel that the lady wept', or would have if consideration for her complexion had not prevailed, and Beelzebub's owner hastened to gasp out a little hurricane of apologies and inquiries as to the estimated cost of the damage.

The lady really behaved very sweetly considering her provocation, and if in her agitation she placed the price of her ravaged boa somewhat above its Bond Street level, it was only in accordance with the impulse which teaches us to value things the more when we have lost them. Gibbon had not the amount on him, would the lady give him her address, or, well, yes, perhaps that would be better, he would give her his card, tomorrow afternoon, unfailingly, etc., etc., and before he knew what he was doing he had made an assignation with the boa-bereaved damsel.

Gibbon had never before given tea to a lady in his apartments, and was necessarily rather inept in his administration of this unwonted hospitality, but his fair guest supplied the deficiencies of his experience, and knew exactly when the milder beverage should be followed up by liqueurs and cigarettes. That she was not dissatisfied with her entertainment her host gathered from the fact that she graciously forestalled his invitation to come again and continue his education in the art of tea-giving. In short, she was altogether in affable mood, and if she forgot to give the overwhelmed Gibbon any change for his tenner, she at least atoned for the omission by favouring him with a wholly spontaneous kiss.

This unsolicited kindness was conferred on him while opening his outer door for his visitor's departure, which was the appropriate psychological moment for its delivery; it was unfortunate, nevertheless, that Hilary Helforlether should have chosen the same moment for appearing hull-down on the staircase horizon. Artemus, having sped the parting guest, greeted his new visitor with a hastily mobilized smile, which suffered by comparison with the grin on his sometime disciple's face.

"Oh, you pipeclayed sepulchre! Thought you were the blamed whiting of a lifeless flower, and all that sort of thing. *Rats!* Hullo, what a jolly terrier. Does he belong to you?"

"No; I belong to him. Body and soul," muttered Gibbon, drearily.

APPENDIX TWO

"The East Wing" by Saki (1914)

The provenance of this obscure Saki story is remarkably clear. Two letters from Munro to a "Mr. Lucas" (Edward Verrall Lucas, an author, critic, and one-time assistant editor of *Punch*, who corresponded with John Lane, Munro's publisher by 1911) are on file in the Lucas Collection at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin (see the prefatory note to Appendix Three). The first letter, dated December 9, 1913, reads, "I should like to write a story, as you suggest [Munro may have met Lucas at Lane's offices], for your annual, but you do not say what length you would like it to be. Also the important, if deplorable, mercenary aspect has not been touched on" (see Letter #29 in Appendix Three). The second letter was sent along with the "story I promised you," Munro writes on January 23, 1914 (#31). Munro adds a comment on the story's genesis; although brief, this is one of the very few comments by Munro on Saki's intentions as a writer that exist: "It is a skit on the Bernard Shaw school." (Munro and/or Saki may have disliked Shaw; Munro included a French paper's negative review of Shaw's "Candida" in a May 12, 1908 report from Paris for the *Morning Post* [Langguth 155], while Saki mocks him as "Sherard Blaw, the dramatist who had discovered himself, and who had given so ungrudgingly of his discovery to the world" in *The Unbearable Bassington* (655) and paints him as an insecure egotist in "The Infernal Parliament" and a satirical piece in *The Bystander* in July 1912.) These two letters provide, to my knowledge, the only evidence of the approximate date of composition of a Saki story; assuming that Munro waited for E. V. Lucas' reply regarding the required length and how much he would pay for the story, Saki would have written "The East Wing" between mid-December 1913 and mid-January 1914. Nearly eight months later, nestled among pieces by Barrie, Galsworthy, Browning, and Leacock, "The East Wing" by "'Saki'" appeared in September 1914 in the anthology *Lucas' Annual* (New York: Macmillan; pp. 50-58), edited by E. V. Lucas.

While mistakenly noted on a few websites as a "play," presumably because of its subtitle, Munro calls "The East Wing" a "story" twice in his letters to Lucas but also seems to see it as a "skit". Reprinted here for the first time in fifty years — "The East Wing" was "first [re]discovered in 1946," as a prefatory note in the 1948 Bodley Head edition claims, and reprinted therein and in the 1956 edition (and presumably the 1949 and 1953 editions, too) — this is an absurd and blackly tragicomic farce. Far more than a spoof of a Shavian play, "The East Wing" not only presages Ionesco in its absurdity and Beckett in its existential questioning, but offers a fascinating, sly reworking and satirizing of previous Saki-esque characters and themes — from the carefree dandy and unhappy wife to the importance of art and the suffragette question — by a Saki who is veering off in a daring new direction.

THE EAST WING

A Tragedy in the Manner of the Discursive Dramatists

It was early February and the hour was somewhere about two in the morning. Most of the house-party had retired to bed. Lucien Wattleskeat had merely retired to his bedroom, where he sat over the still vigorous old-age of a fire, balancing the entries in his bridge book. They worked out at seventy-eight shillings on the right side, as the result of two evenings' play, which was not so bad, considering that the stakes had been regrettably low.

Lucien was a young man who regarded himself with an undemonstrative esteem, which the undiscerning were apt to mistake for indifference. Several women of his acquaintance were on the look-out for nice girls for him to marry, a vigil in which he took no share.

The atmosphere of the room was subtly tinged with an essence of tuberose, and more strongly impregnated with the odour of wood-fire smoke. Lucien noticed this latter circumstance as he finished his bridge-audit, and also noticed that the fire in the grate was not a wood one, neither was it smoking.

A stronger smell of smoke blew into the room a moment later as the door opened, and Major Boventry, pyjama-clad and solemnly excited, stood in the doorway.

"The house is on fire!" he exclaimed.

"Oh," said Lucien, "is that it? I thought perhaps you had come to talk to me. If you would shut the door the smoke wouldn't pour in so."

"We ought to do something," said the Major with conviction.

"I hardly know the family," said Lucien, "but I suppose one will be expected to be present, even though the fire does not appear to be in this wing of the house."

"It may spread to here," said the Major.

"Well, let's go and look at it," assented Lucien, "though it's against my principles to meet trouble half-way."

"Grasp your nettle, that's what I say," observed Boventry.

"In this case, Major, it's not our nettle," retorted Lucien, carefully shutting the bedroom door behind him.

In the passage they encountered Canon Clore, arrayed in a dressing-gown of Albanian embroidery, which might have escaped remark in a *Te Deum* service in the Cathedral of the Assumption at Moscow, but which looked out of place in the corridor of an English country house. But then, as Lucien observed to himself, at a fire one can wear anything.

"The house is on fire," said the Canon, with the air of one who lends dignity to a fact by according it gracious recognition.

"It's in the east wing, I think," said the Major.

"I suppose it is another case of suffragette militancy," said the Canon. "I am in favour of women having the vote myself, even if, as some theologians assert, they have no souls. That, indeed, would further an additional argument for including them in the electorate, so that all sections of the community, the soulless and the souled, might be represented, and, being in favour of the female vote, I am naturally in favour of militant means to achieve it. Belonging as I do to a Church Militant, I should be inconsistent if I professed to stand aghast at militant methods in vote-winning warfare. But, at the same time, I cannot resist pointing out that the women who are using violent means to wring the vote-right from a reluctant legislature are destroying the value of the very thing for which they are struggling. A vote is of no conceivable consequence to anybody unless it carries with it the implicit understanding that majority-rule is the settled order of the day, and the militants are actively engaged in demonstrating that any minority armed with a box of matches and a total disregard of consequences can force its opinions and its wishes on an indifferent or hostile community. It is not merely manor-houses they are destroying, but the whole fabric of government by ballot-box."

"Oughtn't we to be doing something about the fire?" said Major Boventry.

"I was going to suggest something of the sort myself," said the Canon stiffly.

"To-morrow may be too late, as the advertisements in the newspapers say," observed Lucien.

In the hall they met their hostess, Mrs. Gramplain.

"I'm so glad you have come," she said; "servants are so little help in an emergency of this kind. My husband has gone off in the car to summon the fire-brigade."

"Haven't you telephoned to them?" asked the Major.

"The telephone unfortunately is in the east wing," said the hostess; "so is the telephone-book. Both are being devoured by the flames at this moment. It makes one feel dreadfully isolated. Now if the fire had only broken out in the west wing instead, we could have used the telephone and had the fire-engines here by now."

"On the other hand," objected Lucien, "Canon Clore and Major Boventry and myself would probably have met with the fate that has overtaken the telephone-book. I think I prefer the present arrangement."

"The butler and most of the other servants are in the dining-room, trying to save the Raeburns and the alleged Van Dyke," continued Mrs. Gramplain, "and in that little room on the first landing, cut off from us by the cruel flames, is my poor darling Eva—Eva of the golden hair. Will none of you save her?"

"Who is Eva of the golden hair?" asked Lucien.

"My daughter," said Mrs. Gramplain.

"I didn't know you had a daughter," said Lucien, "and really I don't think I can risk my life to save some one I've never met or even heard about. You see, my life is not only wonderful and beautiful to myself, but if my life goes, nothing else really matters—to me. I don't suppose you can realise that, to me, the whole world as it exists to-day, the Ulster problem, the Albanian tangle, the Kikuyu controversy, the wide field of social reform and Antarctic exploration, the realms of finance, and research and international armaments, all this varied and crowded and complex world, all comes to a complete and absolute end the moment my life is finished. Eva might be snatched from the flames and live to be the grandmother of brilliant and charming men and women; but, as far as I should be concerned, she and they would no more exist than a vanished puff of cigarette smoke or a dissolved soda-water bubble. And if, in losing my life, I am to lose her life and theirs, as far as I personally am concerned with them, why on earth should I, personally, risk my life to save hers and theirs?"

"Major Boventry," exclaimed Mrs. Gramplain, "you are not clever, but you are a man with honest human feelings. I have only known you for a few hours, but I am sure you are the man I take you for. You will not let my Eva perish."

"Lady," said the Major stumblingly, "I would gladly give my life to rescue your Eva, or anybody's Eva for the matter of that, but my life is not mine to give. I am engaged to the sweetest little woman in the world. I am everything to her. What would my poor little Mildred say if they brought her news that I had cast away my life in an endeavour, perhaps fruitless, to save some unknown girl in a burning country house?"

"You are like all the rest of them," said Mrs. Gramplain bitterly; "I thought that you, at least, were stupid. It shows how rash it is to judge a man by his bridge-play. It has been like this all my life," she continued in dull, level tones; "I was married, when little more than a child, to my husband, and there has never been any real bond of affection between us. We have been polite and considerate to one another, nothing more. I sometimes think that if we had had a child things might have been different."

"But—your daughter Eva?" queried the Canon, and the two other men echoed his question.

"I have never had a daughter," said the woman quietly, yet, amid the roar and crackle of the flames, her voice carried, so that not a syllable was lost. "Eva is the outcome of my imagination. I so much wanted a little girl, and at last I came to believe that she really existed. She grew up, year by year, in my mind, and when she was eighteen I painted her portrait, a beautiful young girl with masses of golden hair. Since that moment the portrait has been Eva. I have altered it a little with the changing years—she is twenty-one now—and I have repainted her dress with every incoming fashion. On her last birthday I painted her a pair of beautiful diamond earrings. Every day I have sat with her for an hour or so, telling her my thoughts, or reading to her. And now she is there, alone with the flames and the smoke, unable to stir, waiting for the deliverance that does not come."

"It is beautiful," said Lucien; "it is the most beautiful thing I have ever heard."

"Where are you going?" asked his hostess, as the young man moved towards the blazing staircase of the east wing.

"I am going to try and save her," he answered; "as she has never existed, my death cannot compromise her future existence. I shall go into nothingness, and she, as far as I am concerned, will go into nothingness too; but then she has never been anything else."

"But your life, your beautiful life?"

"Death in this case is more beautiful."

The Major started forward.

"I am going too," he said simply.

"To save Eva?" cried the woman.

"Yes," he said; "my little Mildred will not grudge me to a woman who has never existed."

"How well he reads our sex," murmured Mrs. Gramplain, "and yet how badly he plays bridge!"

The two men went side by side up the blazing staircase, the slender young figure in the well-fitting dinner-jacket and the thick-set military man in striped pyjamas of an obvious Swan & Edgar pattern. Down in the hall below them stood the woman in her pale wrapper, and the Canon in his wonderful-hued Albanian-work dressing-gown, looking like the arch-priests of some strange religion presiding at a human sacrifice.

As the rescue-party disappeared into the roaring cavern of smoke and flames, the butler came into the hall, bearing with him one of the Raeburns.

"I think I hear the clanging of the fire-engines, ma'am," he announced.

Mrs. Gramplain continued staring at the spot where the two men had disappeared.

"How stupid of me!" she said presently to the Canon. "I've just remembered I sent Eva to Exeter to be cleaned. Those two men have lost their lives for nothing."

"They have certainly lost their lives," said the Canon.

"The irony of it all," said Mrs. Gramplain, "the tragic irony of it all!"

"The real irony of the affair lies in the fact that it will be instrumental in working a social revolution of the utmost magnitude," said the Canon. "When it becomes known, through the length and breadth of the land, that an army officer and a young ornament of the social world have lost their lives in a country-house fire, started by suffragette incendiarism, the conscience of the country will be aroused, and people will cry out that the price is too heavy to pay. The militants will be in worse odour than ever, but, like the Importunate Widow, they will get their way. Over the charred bodies of Major Boventry and Lucien Wattleskeat the banners of progress and enfranchisement will be carried forward to victory, and the mothers of the nation will henceforth take their part in electing the Mother of Parliaments. England will range herself with Finland and other enlightened countries which have already admitted women to the labours, honours, and responsibilities of the polling-booth. In the early hours of this February morning a candle has been lighted——"

"The fire was caused by an over-heated flue, and not by suffragettes, sir," interposed the butler.

At that moment a scurry of hoofs and a clanging of bells, together with the hoot of a motor-horn, were heard above the roaring of the flames.

"The fire-brigade!" exclaimed the Canon.

"The fire-brigade and my husband," said Mrs. Gramplain, in her dull level voice; "it will all begin over again now, the old life, the old unsatisfying weariness, the old monotony; nothing will be changed."

"Except the east wing," said the Canon gently.

APPENDIX THREE

H. H. Munro's business letters to John Lane/The Bodley Head Publishers, 1911–15

"'the gratitude of author and publisher for being introduced to one another is usually short-lived'"

— *When William Came* (789)

These forty letters (there seem to have been more; Langguth quotes a number of letters to Lane that are not in the library's holdings[147]), transcribed and reprinted here for the first time, are in the archives of the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin. Thirty-eight letters are in the John Lane Company Records, while the two missives to E. V. Lucas are in the Lucas Collection. The letters were written in blue or black ink, usually on large notepad-size, fairly thick square paper, and often folded. Some are addressed to John Lane himself, while others are presumably meant for a secretary or other employee in the company ("Jenkins," "Willett"). No letter was longer than two pages; Munro signed his name with all the letters linked and on a slant to the upper-right. On a few of the letters, there are some pencil notations of money or other items sent, or calculations of money, presumably made by an employee at the John Lane Company. There are often many months between letters, and then two or three were sent out in one month, presumably as submission and publication deadlines approached. I have arranged the missives chronologically and numbered each one; my annotations appear on the right, in square brackets, including the original newspaper publication dates for many of the stories.

John Lane (1854-1925) was the co-founder and publisher of the Bodley Head, later John Lane/The Bodley Head (1887-1936). The Oscar Wilde scandal brought about the end of its most famous publication, *The Yellow Book*, in 1897, which had featured Wilde, Aubrey Beardsley, and others. Other famous authors published by Lane and the Bodley Head included H. G. Wells, Stephen Leacock, and G. K. Chesterton. Saki seems to have approached John Lane/The Bodley Head in February 1911 after publishing his two *Reginald* collections with Methuen, a company he found "dreadfully unenterprising" (#1) in their publicity of his works.

Little is known about the nature of Munro's relationship with Lane, who also hailed from Devonshire. Certainly the primary indication from the correspondence here is

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[147] The most interesting of the missing letters which Langguth quotes is Munro's apparent notification of his enlistment, written from a regimental camp at Slough circa winter 1914-15, which I have transcribed from Langguth's description (253) thus:

> Dear Lane,
>
> I am a trooper in the above force, and I've asked A. R. Reynolds (permanent address: National Liberal Club, Whitehall) to look after my literary affairs while I am on service. If anything 'conclusive' happens to me, my brother, C. A. Munro, governor, H. M. Prison, Mountjoy, Dublin, is my executor.
>
> I hope to get out $^{\text{to the front}}$ in the course of a couple of months. It is only fitting that the author of 'When William ^ Came' should go to meet William half way. I hope that things are going well with you. Very sincerely yours,
>
> (Trooper) H.H. Munro

that, as Lane said about his connection with Wilde during the latter's infamous trials, "[t]heir relations were entirely of a business nature" (Hyde 159). The letters here show that Munro seemed to know Lane and his wife fairly well, but Munro is also rather brusque and impatient with Lane's business practices, from publication dates to remuneration. Langguth quotes a reminiscence by Cecil William Mercer (pen-name Dornford Yates), in which he recalls passing Lane on the street with his cousin, whereupon Munro turned to him and said, "'Good fellow, Lane. Just don't let him publish your books'" (168).

Adam Frost notes in "The Letters of H. H. Munro: Unfinished Business," that Munro — as with his friends and family — never seemed to "feel the need to reward his publisher with information about how and why and what he wrote. He never mentioned his activities outside his books; never mentioned friends; never gave literary or political opinions" (200). There are few Saki-esque witticisms in Munro's correspondence (though those few are deft, as with his wry undercutting of his own concerns about the reviews and sales of *The Chronicles of Clovis* at the end of Letter #11, or his quotation from a baffled review in *New Age* to conclude Letter #18). The letters written after August 1914 reveal some of the military training grounds around England where the enlisted Munro spent time, as well as his rises in rank.

The most valuable discovery lies in Letters #13 and #14. Langguth assumes (227-28) — perhaps because of the phrase "the political setting of the book" — that Munro is referring to *When William Came* in the Feb. 12, 1912 missive, but it is clear from the successive letter that Munro is referring to *The Unbearable Bassington* (not published until October 1912), which he has been working on since at least May 1911 (see #3). Indeed, in the correspondence that survives, there is no evidence that Munro is concerned with the publication date of his post-war dystopia novel. Instead, "the political setting" probably refers to the topical repartee at Serena Golackly's card party (Ch. VII) and perhaps also to the characters of Julian Jull and Courtenay Youghal being based on parliamentarians of the time. Munro's mentions of the London upper class-set novel's "strong Society undercurrent" and his wish to see it available "during the Season" (#13) thus make more sense. Gillen notes that Munro went with his sister and father "to London in the late spring of 1892 to partake in the ritualized pleasures of that months-long house party of the Establishment, the London Season. The sophistication of the drawing room, the dinner table, and the ballroom was the culmination of Hector's education; the glossy and urbane world of fashion that paraded before him was to be his chosen and peculiarly personal corner of English letters" (22). It makes sense, too, that Munro would ask Robert Ross (#13), "a literary columnist for the *Bystander* and Oscar Wilde's editor and steadfast friend" (Langguth 227), for advice on the best time to put out a novel about a doomed dandy.

Letters #22 and #23 make it clear that, even as he complains about late payment for *The Unbearable Bassington*, Munro is close to finishing *When William Came* by August 1913 (and seems to have slipped a reference to his vexed relationship with Lane into that novel — see epigraph above). Munro's concerns about the release of the novel, for the sake of political relevance, are expressed in #25. From the evidence of #28, *When William Came* seems to have been published in November 1913.

In his biography, Gillen writes that

> John Lane cared rather deeply about the artistic quality of the books on his list; to have Lane's name as publisher below the titles of one's books was to assure, therefore, careful printing, tasteful makeup, and a respectful critical reception. Since Munro was concerned primarily with the acceptance of his work by the 'right' audience, his conversion to John Lane made sense artistically. (71)

Yet many of these letters show that Lane and his staff were either not sufficiently attentive to or communicative about their book design and publicity for Munro's liking. Increasingly, Munro comes across as a shrewd, persistent bargainer who is determined to have his say over the designs, advertising, and publication dates for his books. He offers his opinion of the best cover for *The Chronicles of Clovis* (#9), suggests newspapers to which review copies of it should be sent (#11), asks if he retains the rights to the volume (#16), suggests review quotations in an advertisement for *The Chronicles of Clovis* (#18), offers his own sketch for the jacket of *The Unbearable Bassington* (#19), and seems irate when it is refused two months later (#21). Munro suggests review quotations from the *Times* for *When William Came* (#28) and submits a recommendation of the book by Lord Roberts (#30), perhaps in the hope that it may used be as a blurb for the book by Lane. Even while enlisted and training for war, Munro inquires about the sales of his books (#38). Most notably, in Letter #15, after complaining of not receiving his advance for the novel or any word about the printing of *The Unbearable Bassington* in the United States, he ends his March 18 missive, "You will be amused to hear that I received a complimentary letter from Methuen & Co. (the first of its kind from that quarter) asking for another volume of short stories." As Langguth found this letter from Methuen in John Lane's files in The Bodley Head offices (although there is no copy of it in the Ransom Center's holdings), Munro likely sent the Methuen letter to Lane as proof that another publisher was pursuing him and to demand that his requests be taken more seriously. The notice certainly prompted a quick response, for Munro's next communiqué (#16) is dated a mere eleven days later and begins, "Thankyou very much for your letter."

Frost concludes that in these letters "we see Hector Hugh Munro, not Saki. The eventual stories may look composed and unruffled, but behind the scenes there is consternation and industry. . . . a practical, pragmatic self-publicist . . . he cares about his stories" (203). But while Munro may, beyond "the worries about money . . . [be] deeply concerned about the people he reaches, worried about making his books the best they can be, annoyed when John Lane seems to jeopardize the bond of trust between writer and reader" (203), these usually terse, business-like letters suggest that Munro took his fiction-writing seriously because, by 1908 — though we don't know how much inherited money he had — it was his sole means of working income until the "Potted Parliament" columns for *The Outlook* in 1914. (In about a six-year period as a full-time fiction writer, Saki wrote two novels and, by my estimate, at least four dramas and 115 of Munro/Saki's 138 short stories between 1908 and August 1914, when Munro enlisted, an output that would total close to 900 printed pages in *The Penguin Complete Saki*. Note, too, in Appendix Six, Saki's various pieces for different papers in the March–May 1913 period.) Munro's sister claims in her memoir that he was not worried about money and Gillen reiterates this notion:

> Although Lane was a dedicated discoverer of writing talent, he was a hardheaded business man who, if he could, gave harsh terms to his authors. He was also very indignant if an author had the temerity to introduce a literary agent into a commercial discussion. Munro, on the other hand, though not at all well-off, was rather lordly about such crass considerations. . . . Such unconcern, aristocratic in its disdain, naturally helped Lane in his business dealings with Munro; when Munro came to Lane, it must have seemed to the publisher to be the opportunity to strike a very good bargain indeed. (71)

In these letters, however, what little Munro reveals of himself gives the lie to his supposedly intimate sister Ethel's and biographer Gillen's assurances that he was cavalier about money. Whether or not Lane made the most out of Munro, Munro was constantly concerned about getting the money he was owed from Lane, for almost half of the thirty letters written after the publication of *The Chronicles of Clovis* (Saki's first book for John Lane) concern royalties due, deposits, receipts, statements of sales, or other such financial issues.

What we see in this correspondence is Munro as his own agent, requesting story lengths, agitating for payment, and negotiating financial terms; these business letters show Munro as a possibly reluctant (given the brevity of the missives) but persistent and concerned businessman, always returning in his professional correspondence to their basic commercial purpose and touching, however lightly, on "the important, if deplorable, mercenary aspect" (#29).

#1.

97 Mortimer St.
W.

[Munro's London residence from 1908-14]

15. 2. 'XI

Dear Mr. Lane,
I am sending
you some of my collected
sketches which you might
like to publish in volume
form. Methuen have
published two previous
~~stori~~ books of mine, but
they are dreadfully un-
enterprising in the way
of advertising.
Very sincerely your's [sic]
H.H.Munro

[this would become *The Chronicles of Clovis*]

[Methuen published *Reginald* in September 1904 and *Reginald in Russia* in 1910]

#2.

97 Mortimer Street
W.

26. 4. 'XI

Dear Sir,
I have not yet
received your opinion on
the stories "Tobermory and
other sketches" left with
you on Feb. 15th last.

[*The Chronicles of Clovis*, containing twenty-eight stories, was published in London in September (from the evidence of Letters #10 & #11) 1911]

I enclose four further
sketches, "The Easter Egg",
"The Chaplet",
"The Peace of Mowsle
Barton" and "Mrs.
Packletide's Tiger."

[first published in *WG*, February 18, 1911]

[first published in an issue of *The Bystander*]

[p. 2]
Four or five of the
stories deal prominently
with animals, and perhaps
"Beasts and Super Beasts"
would be a better title
than "Tobermory."

[this would become the title of Saki's 1914 collection]

Awaiting the favour of
an early reply,
Sincerely your's
H.H.Munro

#3.

16. 5. '11

97 Mortimer S^{t}.
W.

Dear Mr. Jenkins,

I have been very busy both with the novel and the sketches, but I will let you have the paragraph and the signed agreement tomorrow.

[what would become *The Unbearable Bassington*]

I have two longish sketches in addition to those I submitted to you, and another 'Clovis' story which is to appear
[p. 2]
in the "Bystander" but which I am permitted to send to you at once. I will try and turn out another longish Clovis one.

Sincerely your's
H.H.Munro

#4.

Sketches to form volume with suggested title "Tobermory and Other Sketches." [undated letter]

Tobermory	[first publ. in *WG*, Nov. 27, 1909, without Clovis as a character; see Langguth 169-70]
Wratislav	[*WG*, date unknown]
The Matchmaker	[*WG*, date unknown]
Hermann the Irascible	[*WG*, date unknown]
The Unrest Cure	[*WG*, April 1, 1910]
Adrian	[*WG*, date unknown]
Sredni Vashtar	[*WG*, May 28, 1910]
The Quest	[*WG*, date unknown]
The Jesting of Arlington Stringham	[*WG*, August 20, 1910]
The Background	[*Leinsters' Magazine*, date unknown]
The Stampeding of Lady Bastable	[*Daily Mail*, date unknown]
Filboid Studge	[*The Bystander*, December 7, 1910]
Esmé	[*WG*, December 17, 1910]

H. H. Munro
97 Mortimer St.
W.

#5.

Telephone: 14843 Central
97 Mortimer S^t
W.

9. 6. 'XI

Dear Sir,

I enclose a Clovis story, which is the only available material I have on hand. I will try and turn out a longish story in a day or two, if that will be soon enough.

Sincerely your's
H.H.Munro

#6.

97 Mortimer S^{t}.
W.
19. 6. 'XI

Dear Sir,

I enclose a long Clovis story, 'the Story of St Vespaluus', which I hope will suffice to fill out the book to the required length. I am averse to writing anything of an immediately topical nature, such as a story dealing with the Coronation, as that gives a book an air of out-of-dateness almost as soon as it it [sic] published. Please let me know if you think you have now enough material.

[the Coronation of George V, June 22, 1911]

Sincerely your's
H.H.Munro

#7.

97 Mortimer Street
W.

5. 7. 'XI

Herewith a story, "The way to the Dairy", of good length, which, with the inclusion of "S^t Vespaluus", ought to be sufficient to finish the volume. I have come to the conclusion that a separate volume of saint stories would be very difficult to turn out without incurring the risk of sameness, so "Vespaluus" had better go in with the others.

H.H.Munro

#8.

18. 7. 'XI

I don't know whether the enclosed is in time to be included in the "Chronicles of Clovis."

H.H.Munro

[this could be "The Recessional," *WG*, July 8, 1911]

#9.

[97 Mortimer S^{t}
W.]

13. 8. 'XI

Dear Sir,

Your favour of the covers of "Clovis" to hand. The red with white lettering (which I have marked I.) seems to me the best in all particulars save one, viz: the amended drawing of the leg in the green cover (marked II.) is a distinct im-
[p. 2]
provement. on the other hand I think the extra touches of [illegible]ding in that cover take away from the simplicity of the design and spoil the "white flannel" effect. So if we can have the No. I. cover with the amended leg but without the additional shadings of No. II. I think that will do very well.

Sincerely your's
H.H.Munro

#10.

97 Mortimer S^{t}
W.

24. 8. 'XI

Dear Sir,

Herewith a story which should space to 16 pages and complete the volume. It would be better to insert it just before "Ministers of Grace" which makes $^{a\ more}$ ~~an~~ effective wind-up.
^ Sincerely your's
H.H.Munro

[likely "A Matter of Sentiment," "The Secret Sin of Septimus Brope," or "The Remoulding of Groby Lington"] [*The Bystander*, November 30, 1910; original version contained the politicians' real names]

#11.

"Chronicles of Clovis."

Warcot, Caterham
23. 10. 'XI

[address of the cottage in Surrey
that Munro bought for his sister
in 1909; see Langguth 157]

Dear Sir,

Thankyou for the 6 copies of "Clovis." From motives of strict economy I have not employed a Cutting Agency this time. I have seen reviews in "D. Mail," "Observer" & "Bystander," the 2 latter kind, almost affectionate. If there are any particularly interesting ones, for or against, would you let me have a look at them? I enclose stamped envelope.

[a *MP* review of the book, "Reginald's Successor," appeared on this date]

Has a copy been sent to the "Eye-Witness"? I am told it is an important paper to be noticed in – apparently it is going to cut out the "Nation."

Of course the sale is going to be damned by the title. An elderly gentleman told me he could not read French history of such a remote period.

Sincerely your's
H.H.Munro

#12.

97 Mortimer St.
W.
18. 1.'12

Dear Sir,

I enclose an additional chapter to "The Van Der Meulen", to follow Chapter X (?) in which the scene is laid in the Rutland Galleries. I have also some additional matter to work into Chap.I.

[working title for *The Unbearable Bassington*, after Francesca Bassington's favourite painting]

Sincerely your's
H.H.Munro

#13.

12. 2. '12 97 Mortimer S^{t}
W.

Dear Mr. Lane,

Since our informal conversation yesterday about deferring publication of the novel till July or thereabouts I have consulted several literary friends (including Mr. Robert Ross) and they unanimously advise immediate publication, that is to say some time in March. Apart from the political setting of the book it has a strong Society undercurrent and I cannot help thinking that it would stand a better chance of being read and talked about during the Season than it will just at the fag-end.

Sincerely your's
H.H.Munro

[see my prefatory note above]

[*The Unbearable Bassington* was published in October 1912]

[approx. May 1 to July 31]

#14.

~~TELEPHONE 7439 GERRARD~~

~~49, RUSSELL SQUARE,~~
~~W.C.~~

97 Mortimer S^{t}.
W.

[14. 2. '12]

Dear Mr. Lane,

Herewith the novel. It is, by the way, the only copy in existence, so it had better be typed in America, but the original m.s. should be carefully kept.

I was not able to see Ross last night.

[presumably Robert Ross; see #13]

I am still un-
[p. 2]
convinced about the wisdom of deferring the English appearance of the book, but though unconvinced I am not too bigoted to be bribed. It would be a real boon to me if the £.25 we spoke of yesterday could be paid into my account with Mess^{rs} Henry S. King & Co., 9 Pall Mall.

"Comus Bassington" is the best provisional title I can think of. With kind regards,

Sincerely your's
H.H.Munro

#15.

18. 3. '12

COCOA TREE CLUB, [Munro's club]
TELEGRAMS, 64, S^T JAMES'S STREET,
% COCOA LONDON. S.W.
[club logo]
TELEPHONE Nº 3869 GERRARD.

Dear Mr. Lane,
I left my novel with you on Feb. 14th for immediate dispatch to America and was promised early information as to its destiny there, but I have heard nothing yet about it. Also I have heard nothing further about the advance sum of £.25 which you suggested and which I
[p. 2]
promptly accepted.

You will be amused to hear that I received a complimentary letter from Methuen & Co. (the first of its kind from that quarter) asking for another volume of short stories. [quoted by Langguth, p. 166]

Sincerely your's
H.H.Munro

#16.

97 Mortimer St.
W.
~~COCOA TREE,~~
TELEGRAMS, ~~S^{T} JAMES'S STREET,~~
% COCOA LONDON. ~~S.W.~~

TELEPHONE N^{o} 3869 GERRARD. 29. 3. '12

Dear Mr. Lane,

Thankyou very much for your letter.

Regarding the "Clovis" stories for New York I suppose the rights of reproduction in book form remain with me, and the English rights?

[the American edition of *The Chronicles of Clovis* was published in New York in February 1913.]

I am now engaged on a "Clovis" story which [p. 2] I think will shape rather well.

Sincerely your's
H.H.Munro

#17.

Aug. 8th '12

"Blue Street, W." is the best title I can think of for the novel, late "Van der Meulen."

H.H.Munro

The Bassington Boy
The Passing of Comus

[the Bassingtons' address, as noted in the novel's first sentence: "Francesca Bassington sat in the drawing-room of her House in Blue Street, W. . . ."]

#18.

Aug. 14th
at
THE PADDOCK.
HOYLAKE.
N^R BIRKENHEAD.

[near Liverpool; according to Langguth, Munro and his sister visited the family of their brother Charlie in Carrig Cnoc, Ireland every August; Munro likely wrote this before boarding "an overnight boat train to Derry" from Liverpool (209)]

Concerning the title of the ci-devant "Van der Meulen," everyone to whom I have put the alternatives "The Bassington Boy" and "Blue Street, W." prefers the latter as a selling title; also, with Reginald and Clovis to misguide them, people will be certain to think, from the former alternative, that the book is just another variation
[p. 2]
of a familiar theme. Therefore I think we had better settle on "Blue Street, W.".

In advertising "Clovis" in the inside of the book I suggest short quotations from the "Morning Post," "West^r Gazette", "Daily Telegraph", "Saturday Review," "Spectator", and any other that is particularly favourable, and without fail the extract from the "New Age" 'Why, oh why, can we see no humour in these stories?,' to bring up the rear of the quotations.

H.H.Munro

#19.

26. 8. '12

I enclose sketch for paper wrapper of (?) 'Blue Street, W.", leaving space at the top for title, which might be in the same lettering as the "Clovis" cover. If the design requires to be narrowed it can be cut a bit on the tree side.

I shall be returning to Town on the 28th and will call at the Bodley Head the following day.

H.H.Munro

#20.

97 Mortimer Street
W.

1. 9. '12

Dear Willett,

"Comus holds the Stage" is to my mind a very non-attracting title, and is utterly meaningless as regards anything in the book. It is no use tacking a Charles Garvice sort of title on a book of a totally different sort written for a totally different public.

[p. 2]

I shall be looking in on you tomorrow (Monday) morning, as I have a Clovis story for America; remind me to ask you how Ella Wheeler Wilcox should be spelt.

[a popular American poetess; in "The Hen," published in *Beasts and Super-Beasts*, Clovis mixes a cocktail he names after her]

Very sincerely your's
H.H.Munro

#21.

97 Mortimer Street
W.
Oct. 22nd '12

Dear Mr. Willett,
Your letter of the
21st to hand, informing me
that you cannot give any
guarantee that the wrapper
will not be used.
It seems a monstrous
thing to me that an author
should be obliged to beg
that his work should
not be disfigured by
a grotesquely inappro-
[p. 2]
priate wrapper-illustration,
and I shall make no further
appeal on the subject.
If the wrapper is used
with any copies in this
country I shall refuse to
do anything to extend the
sale of the book and I
shall not submit any
other to the Bodley Head
for publication.
Sincerely your's
H.H.Munro

#22.

97 Mortimer Street
W.
July 14th '13

Dear Lane,

Will you please send any royalties that may be now payable, to my account with Henry S. King and Co., 9 Pall Mall, and greatly oblige me.

I am leaving Town to-day for visits in Staffordshire and Devonshire and am taking the rough manuscript of "When William Came" with me. I hope to have it completed in about two
[p. 2]
weeks, when I shall be returning to Town and can then let you see it.

Very sincerely your's

H.H.Munro

["The Holy War" (*MP*, May 6, 1913) features a man named "Revil Yealmton" who returns from Asiatic Russia to the West Country; the similarities to *WWC*'s Murrey Yeovil, who returns to England from Siberia and has a country house in East Wessex, suggests that "The Holy War" inspired some of *WWC* circa early 1913]

#23.

Golden Lion Hotel
Barnstaple
July 23rd '13

[Pilton, where Munro grew up, is about two kilometres from Barnstaple]

Dear Lane,

King and Co. are sometimes very slow in advising me of the paying-in of cheques, and I have not heard from them whether any cheque has been received for me from the Bodley Head.

Will you let me know, at the above address, whether you have sent a cheque for the 'Bassington' royalties to them.

Am pegging away at the new book, but there are many
[p. 2]
distractions.

Very sincerely your's
H.H.Munro

#24.

Golden Lion Hotel
Barnstaple
July 25th '13

Dear Willett,

Many thanks for your letter. I know that you have, by agreement, from the end of June to October to pay the year's royalties in, but when I saw you before leaving Town you said there was no objection to my having £15 or so paid immediately if I wanted it. After all it is payment for work finished more than 18 months ago, and you must
[p.2]
remember that writing a novel takes me away from^ the far more profitable journalistic work which is paid for within a week or two. There is not much temptation for me to write books if it is so difficult to get any money out of the job.

If possible, please pay the sum of £15 into my account by Monday, and kindly let me know in any case, as King & Co. are sometimes slow in advising me.

Very sincerely your's
H.H.Munro

[Munro apparently jotted down parts of *When William Came (A Story of London Under The Hohenzollerns)* in shorthand on the back of a bill at the Golden Lion in August 1913; see Langguth 235]

#25.

Sep. 10th '13
COCOA TREE,
S^T JAMES'S STREET,
S.W.

Dear Willett,

On thinking over the date of publication question, concerning "When William came," a further reason, and a very strong one, for early issue is that Emperors are mortal; the death or even the severe illness of the Kaiser would "queer" the book. "When William Went" would be a charmingly alliterative title, but another book would have to be written to suit it.

Ergo . . .

Very sincerely your's
H.H.Munro

[Kaiser Wilhelm II (Friedrich Wilhelm Viktor Allbrecht von Hohenzollern), 1859-1941]

#26.

97 Mortimer Street
W.
~~COCOA TREE,~~
~~S^T JAMES'S STREET,~~
~~S.W.~~

Oct. 7th '13

Dear Willett,

I have not yet received the account for "Bassington" etc. The clause "within three months from June 30th" in my contract seems to mean "any damned time."

However it is not the account that I am concerned about, as I suppose it is a very trifling sum, but I am anxious to have £.25 down on the new book within the present week; as I told
[p. 2]
you before, I am quite fifty guineas out of pocket in ready money through having concentrated my time on the novel.

Very sincerely your's
H.H.Munro

I hear you have been away on a holiday; I hope you had good weather and a good time.

#27.

97 Mortimer Street
W.
Nov. 19th '13

Dear Lane,

I was sorry to miss you on Monday, and today I am lunching with my sister. I fear we both have to go down to Barnstaple at once, as my aunt, who is eighty-six, seems rather critically ill.

[Munro's father's sister, Charlotte Maria Munro ("Aunt Tom"), one of the two aunts who raised Munro and his siblings, died in February 1915]

I may have to be away some little time, and it will be a convenience if you will pay the £.25, that I have been clamouring [p. 2] for since the book was delivered, into my account with Messrs H.S. King & Co. Concentrating on a novel, as I have pointed out before, has the effect of diminishing my other sources of income to an inconvenient extent, hence the disfavour with which I regard even successful novel-writing.

Sincerely your's
H.H.Munro

#28.

97 Mortimer Street
W.
Nov. 20th '13

Dear Lane,

The news from Barnstaple is better, so I am postponing my journey thither till Wednesday next.

There are a couple of sentences in today's "Times" review of "When William Came" which will make useful 'quotes' in an advertisement.

Sincerely your's
H.H.Munro

[*The Times Literary Supplement* review called the novel "a remarkable *tour de force* worked out with great cleverness" (Langguth 235)]

#29.

97 Mortimer Street
W.
Dec. 9th '13

Dear Mr. Lucas,

I should like to write a story, as you suggest, for your annual, but you do not say what length you would like it to be.

Also the important, if deplorable, mercenary aspect has not been touched on.

Very sincerely your's
H.H.Munro

[Edward Verrall Lucas, 1868-1938, author, biographer, critic, and one-time assistant editor of *Punch*, corresponded with John Lane; *Lucas' Annual* was published in September 1914]

#30.

97 Mortimer Street
W.
Jan. 19th '14

Dear Lane,

Herewith the copy of Roberts's letter.

I hope you will soon be out and about again, and that Mrs. Lane is also better. The weather is in rather figetty [sic] mood just now.

Very sincerely your's
H.H.Munro

[Lord Frederick Roberts, 1832-1914, fought in the Second Afghan War and commanded British troops during the Boer War]

[John Lane married wealthy American author Anna Eichberg King in 1898]

Englemere
ascot
Berks

Jan. 8 1914

Dear Sir,

I have now read your book "When William Came" and must tell you how much interested I have been by it and how thoroughly I approve the moral it teaches. I hope the book will be widely read and generally appreciated as it deserves to be.

Your's very truly
Roberts

#31.

97 Mortimer Street
W.
Jan. 23rd '14

Dear Mr. Lucas,
Herewith the story I promised you. It is a skit on the Bernard Shaw school.
Very sincerely your's
H.H.Munro

["The East Wing," *Lucas' Annual*, New York: Macmillan, 1914, pp. 50-58]
[Saki riffed on Shaw's famous title with *Beasts and Super-Beasts* and mocked the dramatist in Chapter XIII of *The Unbearable Bassington*, the story "The Infernal Parliament," and the second instalment of the three-part series "Heart-To-Heart Talks" in *The Bystander*, July 31, 1912]

#32.

97 Mortimer Street.
W.
Feb. 16. '14

Dear Willett,

I enclose a further story, which should surely be enough; it seems to me that it will make a fairly big dose of short story for one volume. They nearly all of them represent about a column and a quarter of the "Morning Post."

[*Beasts and Super-Beasts*, June 1914]

Very sincerely your's
H.H.Munro

When are the press quotations coming along?

[this may be a reference to the suggestion in Letter #28]

#33.

COCOA TREE,
S^I JAMES'S STREET,
S.W.

July 1st '14

Dear Lane,
Please let me have
£25 on account of royalties
for the new book.
I am going to suggest
to H.J. that he should
bring out a magazine
called "Counter-Blast."
Very sincerely your's
H.H.Munro

[probably Holbrook Jackson, magazine editor and a friend of Lane, whom Munro likely met on June 20 at a reception for Stephen Leacock at the John Lane offices; see Gillen 142]

#34.

July 14th '14

Dear Lane,

Herewith receipt for cheque for £25, for which many thanks. I am keeping myself free for Friday.

Very sincerely your's
H.H.Munro

#35.

A Company
Kensington Battalion
18. 10. '14 Royal Fusiliers
White City
Shepherds Bush
W.

Dear Lane,

I have not received from you direct, or through Reynolds, the statement of sales of 'When William Came,' due, according to agreement, on Oct. 1st. Will you pay the sum due on royalties into my account with Henry S. King & Co., 9 Pall Mall, if you have not already done so. ~~Th~~ It was due, I believe, on Oct. 1st.

I have transferred from King Edward's Horse into the above infantry regiment; I like the cavalry work better, but it was so exacting that I feared I should break down under it.

With kindest regards to Yourself and all at Vigo St.,

Yours
(Private) H.H.Munro

[A. Rothay (Roy) Reynolds, d. 1940, journalist and author, whom Munro befriended in St. Petersburg in 1907; Reynolds' memoir of Munro prefaces the 1919 posthumous collection *The Toys of Peace*; Langguth quotes an earlier letter from the enlisted Munro to Lane that states, "I've asked A. R. Reynolds (permanent address: National Liberal Club, Whitehall) to look after my literary affairs while I am on service" (253)]

#36.

Kensington Battalion
Royal Fusiliers
Oct. 25th White City
Shepherds Bush
W.

Dear Willett

Thankyou for the statement of sales and for your letter of 19th instant.

I agree to your proposal that £20 should be paid to me on account of royalties due, and the balance held over till payment is more convenient, but I trust you will bear in mind the fact that I am earning
[p.2]
nothing now beyond my pay as a private soldier, and a bank balance becomes a thing of some importance.

Henry S. King and co., 9 Pall Mall, S.W. are my bankers.

As recognition of my complaisance in this matter will the Bodley Head present me with a copy of the "Chronicles of Clovis" for some of my comrades to read? I will send you the address of the quarters to which we are about to move, as my experience of forwarded parcels has not been encouraging.
Best wishes for brighter times

Your's sincerely
(Private) H.H.Munro

#37.

29. 10. '14

Private Munro
A Company
Kensington Battalion Royal Fusiliers
54 Station Road
Horsham, Sussex

Dear Willett,

Thankyou for your offer to send some books in addition to "Clovis." I think short stories would be more acceptable than novels, as we only have fragmentary opportunities for reading.

Sincerely your's
H.H.Munro

[according to Langguth (252), at some point during his military training, Munro had Lane send him *Jesus of Nazareth*, published by Harrison and Sons, 5 shillings]

#38.

22nd Batt. Royal Fusiliers
24. 6. '15 after today { A Comp^{y}
Clipstone Camp
Edwinstowe, Notts.

Dear Lane,

Will you, please, pay at your convenience the sum due to me (from ‸the balance of last October's account) into my account with Mess^{rs} Henry S. King & Co. 9 Pall Mall, S. W. It will be a great help to me if it can be paid in before the 10th of next month.

The "Bystander" of this week has an article of mine reprinted from our regimental "Fortnightly Gazette." Mrs. Lane will recognize a quotation from one of her writings.

["On Being Company Orderly Corporal," *The Bystander*, June 23, 1915; "A gifted woman writer has observed 'it is an extravagance to do anything that someone else can do better'."]

The "Reginalds" seem to be keeping up their sales, so I hope the "Clovis" and Bassington family are doing well, and that you are having good sales for your books generally.

Kind regards to all,
Your's Very sincerely
H.H.Munro

#39.

21. 7. '15

A Comp^{y} No. 2 Hut
22nd Batt. R.F.
Clipstone Camp, Notts.

My dear Lane,

King & Co. have advised me that they have received the sum of £.20. 19. 8 from you paid into my account. According to our account and to a memorandum written by Willett last autumn the sum then due to me was £64. 19. 8^{d}, of which £20 (or it may have been £25 – I have not looked it up) was paid to me, and the balance held over; £20. 19. 8 does not therefore represent the balance of what is owing to me. Will you please look into the matter.

[see Letter #34 for mention of a "statement of sales" from Willett]

With kind regards,
Sincerely your's
(Lance Corporal) H.H.Munro

#40.

9. 10. '15

A. Corp. 22nd R.F.
Bhurt??ore, Tidworth Camp
Harts

Dear Willett,

I ought to have received a statement of sales by the 1st of this month, but none has reached me. Will you pay whatever may be owing me into my account with Henry S. King & Co, 9 Pall Mall, S.W.

Will you please send me here a copy of "Beasts & Superbeasts."

With best wishes,
Your's very sincerely
H.H.Munro
(Corporal)

[in her memoir, Ethel Munro includes two letters from her brother, dated 10.10.15 and Nov. 7, 1915, sent from "Tidworth Camp, Hants." (704)]

APPENDIX FOUR

Munro's Letter to the Editor re: enlistment, *Morning Post*, Wednesday, August 5, 1914

AN ORGANISING AUTHORITY WANTED.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE MORNING POST.

SIR,—If an expeditionary force is sent out there will be stiff work before it and the necessity for reinforcement must be heavy; it will not only be picked men that we will eventually be sending out. There are many who would like to go in some fighting capacity who cannot leave their work and businesses, but there are others, such as myself, who want to go and can go, but who do not know exactly how their services can be utilised.

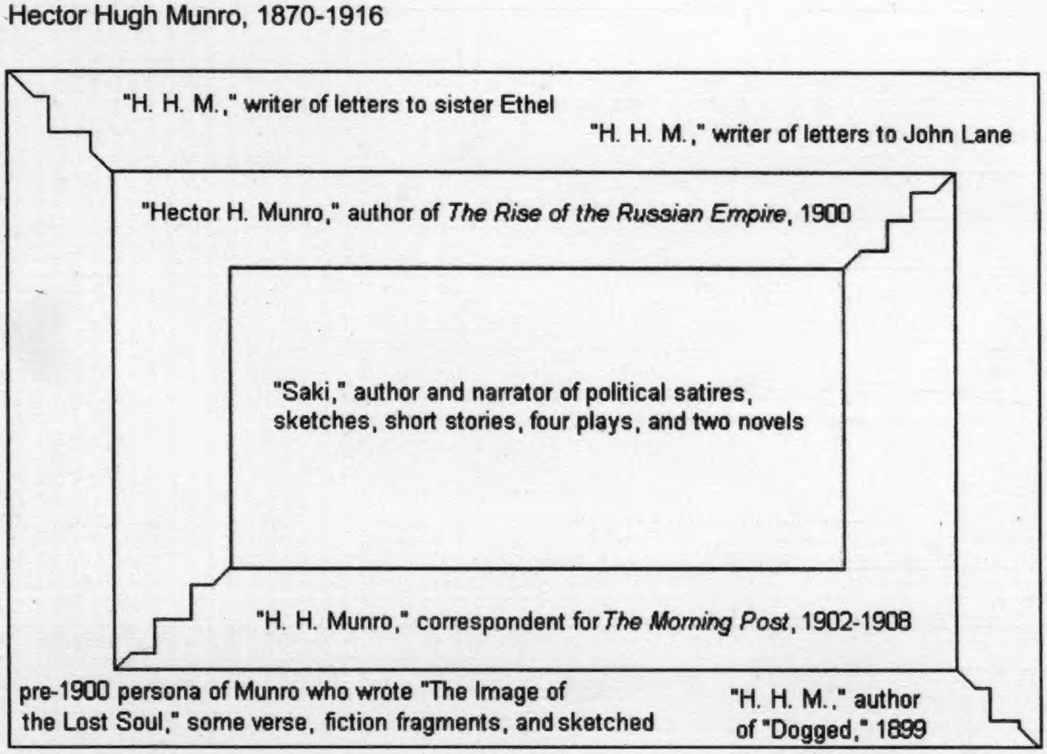
For example, I was a year and a half in an Indian police force. I can ride (and look after a horse), my early experience of a rifle has been, if I may use the Irishism, with a carbine, my eyesight is good, I speak French, German, and a little Russian. As an interpreter-belligerent I ought to be of some use. There are probably thousands like myself who would like to feel that they have a chance of going out, and you might do a great service by putting us in touch with some organising authority.—Yours, &c.,

August 4. H. H. MUNRO.

APPENDIX FIVE

Schematic of the Writing Personas of Hector Hugh Munro

My diagrammatic representation cannot fully represent the complex confusions, interactions, and overlaps between various personas or sub-personas, such as the pieces for the 22^{nd} *Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers' Fortnightly Gazette* that were signed "Saki," nor do I include here the "Fingershape" diary written in shorthand and code that Langguth discusses in his biography as possible evidence of Munro's private homosexuality (115-17 *passim*), which may have come from the "true" person of Hector Hugh Munro, or merely expressed another aspect of the man. The schematic here is not intended to be hierarchical, but is organized, from the outside in, on the basis of the chronological emergence and names of the various personas of Hector Hugh Munro, 1870-1916.


Hector Hugh Munro, 1870-1916
"H. H. M.," writer of letters to sister Ethel
"H. H. M.," writer of letters to John Lane
"Hector H. Munro," author of *The Rise of the Russian Empire*, 1900
"Saki," author and narrator of political satires, sketches, short stories, four plays, and two novels
"H. H. Munro," correspondent for *The Morning Post*, 1902-1908
pre-1900 persona of Munro who wrote "The Image of the Lost Soul," some verse, fiction fragments, and sketched
"H. H. M.," author of "Dogged," 1899

APPENDIX SIX

Bibliography of the Fiction of Munro/Saki

This incomplete list — of Munro/Saki's 138 stories (I exclude the essays and two accounts of the front in *The Square Egg*), only 76 are listed here, although some of his stories never appeared first in a newspaper, as noted below — of original forums for and/or dates of Munro's or Saki's fiction spans thirty-four years and lists the original writing or publication dates and the newspapers or companies which published Saki's satires, sketches, stories, short fiction anthologies, two of his plays, and his two novels; in a few cases, only the dates of composition are noted and, where possible, I list the artist whose illustration or illustrations accompanied Saki's newspaper satire (all of Gould's Tenniel-inspired caricatures for *The Westminster Alice* can be found, for instance, in the 1933 John Lane/The Bodley Head volume of *The Novels and Plays of Saki*). All of Saki's sketches and satires are listed below, I believe, as all were first published in newspapers and most of them, save the Alice series, remained uncollected (although numerous websites state that Saki's 1902 Kipling-inspired series of political satires appeared in book form as *Not So Stories*, this is, in fact, not so, and is likely a misunderstanding of Ethel's setting of that general title for the newspaper series in italics in her biography [671]). I have gathered these dates and sources from Langguth, Gillen, Drake, Thrane, Haining, Carey, and, in some cases, footnotes or prefaces in Saki anthologies (reproduced, for instance, in the 1930 and 1958 Viking/Modern Library editions of *The Short Stories of Saki*) and I do not include Saki's column "Potted Parliament" for the weekly *The Outlook*, which ran for twenty-five consecutive weeks, from February 21 to August 8, 1914, or Munro's "An Old Love." I include the wartime essays signed by Saki in brackets only because they seem to be Saki's last, officially signed publications during Munro's lifetime. (Some or all of these four essays may have been published in *The Bystander* as well; see Haining xvii and Langguth 254).

In regard to provenance, editing of his works for collection, and dating, the "Acknowledgment" at the end of the 1911 first edition of *The Chronicles of Clovis* is most valuable, for therein Munro/Saki himself states:

> "The Background" originally appeared in the *Leinsters' Magazine* ; "The Stampeding of Lady Bastable" in the *Daily Mail* ; . . . "Ministers of Grace" (in an abbreviated form) in the *Bystander* ; and the remainder of the stories (with the exception of "The Music on the Hill," "The Story of St. Vespaluus," "The Secret Sin of Septimus Brope," "The Remoulding of Groby Lington," and "The Way to the Dairy," which have never previously been published) in the *Westminster Gazette*." (242; see also Letter #4)

Leinsters' Magazine is, presumably, not the same periodical as the *Journal of the Leinster Regiment* in which "The Baker's Dozen" first appeared in October 1909, while it is unknown if any other Saki stories ever appeared in the *Daily Mail*. Apart from the explanation that the first published version of "Ministers of Grace" was shorter ("Tobermory," too, was revised for book publication, with Clovis worked into the story;

the truncation of "Ministers of Grace" — which originally appeared with the actual politicians' names included — may have been made at the newspaper's request, according to layout or space considerations), Munro/Saki helpfully notes the five stories of the twenty-eight in the anthology that had never before appeared in print and that the remainder in the collection were published in *The Westminster Gazette*. Thus, in addition to the seven stories from *The Chronicles of Clovis* whose first publication dates in *WG* are noted below, I have listed the nine more that must have first appeared in that newspaper between 1909 and 1911.

The prefatory notes for the other first editions of anthologies of Saki's stories are not as helpful. The note for *Reginald* (1904) only states, "These sketches originally appeared in the *Westminster Gazette*," likely meaning that all fifteen of the sketches in that collection first appeared in that newspaper (I have ascertained dates for twelve of them, all of which did first appear in *The Westminster Gazette*), especially since the note to the next collection, *Reginald in Russia*, states: "The other sketches [apart from "The Baker's Dozen"] have appeared from time to time in the *Westminster Gazette*" (I have only been able to date eight of the fourteen pieces in that collection). The note for *Beasts and Super-Beasts* (1914) suggests that all but four of the thirty-six stories therein first appeared in the *Morning Post*, while the note to *The Square Egg* (1924) suggests that at least some of the eight sketches, essays, and items of ephemera therein first appeared in *The Outlook*, as well as *The Bystander*, *MP*, and *WG* (I list none of them below; almost all of them were published as being written by Munro, I suspect, as in the only piece I have established a date for, according to Thrane — "The Old Town of Pskoff," *MP*, July 27, 1905). There is little suggestion within the stories as to when they were first written, although "The Toys of Peace" includes a footnote remarking that a newspaper article referred to in the story is an "actual extract from a London paper of March 1914" (*The Penguin Complete Saki* 393), so perhaps Saki wrote that particular story around that time.

Note, too, that the posthumous anthology *The Toys of Peace* (1919), underappreciated by some critics, collects thirty-three stories (most or all of which were first published in *The Bystander*, *MP*, and *WG*) spanning late 1910 ("The Penance") to mid-1914 ("The Guests"), a range that explains the varying quality, concerns, and themes of the tales in that volume. As Carey notes and as, for instance, a quick comparison of the first publication dates of the *Reginald* pieces to the table of contents for *Reginald* shows, the order of stories in a Saki collection does not necessarily reflect the order in which they first appeared in newspapers (making it impossible to tell from the contents of an anthology the order in which the stories were originally written or published).

All items were published as being written by Saki unless otherwise noted.

“The Image of the Lost Soul,” written 1891

“Dogged,” *St. Paul’s*, February 18, 1899 (signed “H. H. M.”)

“Alice in Downing Street,” *The Westminster Gazette*, July 25, 1900 (with illustrations by Francis Carruthers Gould)

“Alice in Pall Mall,” *The Westminster Gazette*, November 5, 1900 (with illustrations by Francis Carruthers Gould)

“Alice and the Liberal Party,” *The Westminster Gazette*, November/December ?, 1900 (with an illustration by Francis Carruthers Gould)

“Alice at Lambeth,” *The Westminster Gazette*, December 12, 1900 (with illustrations by Francis Carruthers Gould)

“The Blood-Feud of Toad-Water,” *The Westminster Gazette*, January 26, 1901 (signed “H. H. M.”)

“The Quatrains of Uttar Al Ghibe. With Explanatory and Conjectural Notes,” *The Westminster Gazette*, March 4, 1901 (with illustrations by Francis Carruthers Gould)

“The Quatrains of Uttar Al Ghibe—II. With Explanatory and Conjectural Notes,” *The Westminster Gazette*, March 19, 1901 (with illustrations by Francis Carruthers Gould)

“Reginald,” *The Westminster Gazette*, September 28, 1901

“Alice at St. Stephen’s,” *The Westminster Gazette*, some time before October 1901 (with an illustration by Francis Carruthers Gould)

“Alice in Difficulties,” *The Westminster Gazette*, September/October ?, 1901 (with illustrations by Francis Carruthers Gould)

“Alice Anywhere but in Downing Street,” *The Westminster Gazette*, September/October ?, 1901 (with illustrations by Francis Carruthers Gould)

“Alice Lunches at Westminster,” *The Westminster Gazette*, October/November ?, 1901 (with an illustration by Francis Carruthers Gould)

“Alice in a Fog,” *The Westminster Gazette*, November 11, 1901 (with illustrations by Francis Carruthers Gould)

“Alice Has Tea at the Hotel Cecil,” *The Westminster Gazette*, November 29, 1901 (with illustrations by Francis Carruthers Gould)

"Reginald on Christmas Presents," *The Westminster Gazette*, December 18, 1901

"The Saint and the Goblin," *The Westminster Gazette*, January 4, 1902

"Alice Goes to Chesterfield," *The Westminster Gazette*, December/January ?, 1901/1902 (with illustrations by Francis Carruthers Gould)

"The Aged Man," *The Westminster Gazette*, December/January ?, 1901/1902 (with an illustration by Francis Carruthers Gould)

"Spades in Wonderland," *The Westminster Gazette*, January 24, 1902? (with an illustration by Francis Carruthers Gould)

"The Political Jungle-Book," *The Westminster Gazette*, February 11 and May 23, 1902 (with illustrations by Francis Carruthers Gould)

"Reginald on the Academy," *The Westminster Gazette*, June 2, 1902

"Reginald's Choir Treat," *The Westminster Gazette*, June 24, 1902

"Reginald at the Theatre," *The Westminster Gazette*, July 17, 1902

"The Woman Who Never Should," *The Westminster Gazette*, July 22, 1902

"Not So Stories," *The Westminster Gazette*, October 9, 15, and November 5, 1902 (with illustrations by Francis Carruthers Gould)

The Westminster Alice, London: Westminster Gazette Office, 1902

"Reginald at the Carlton," *The Westminster Gazette*, March 24, 1903

"Reginald on Besetting Sins," *The Westminster Gazette*, April 22, 1903

"Reginald's Drama," *The Westminster Gazette*, September 8, 1903

"Crumbs from the Big Loaf," *Morning Post*, autumn 1903 (signed "H. H. Munro")

"Reginald on Tariffs," *The Westminster Gazette*, November 6, 1903

"The Angel and his Lost Michael," *Morning Post*, Nov. 16, 1903 (signed "H. H. Munro")

"Spade-Work out of Monmouth," *Morning Post*, Nov. 30, 1903 (signed "H. H. Munro")

"A Jungle Story," *Morning Post*, December 7, 1903 (a sequel to his *WG* Kipling political satires; signed "H. H. Munro")

"The Coming of Nicholas," *Morning Post*, December 21, 1903 (signed "H. H. Munro")

"Reginald's Christmas Revel," *The Westminster Gazette*, December 22, 1903

"Reginald's Rubaiyat," early February 1904

"The Innocence of Reginald," *The Westminster Gazette*, April 6, 1904

Reginald, London: Methuen, September 1904

(only one 1908 story in *WG*, according to Thrane)

"The Sex That Doesn't Shop," *The Westminster Gazette*, March 27, 1909

"The Soul of Laploshka," *The Westminster Gazette*, May 8, 1909

"Gabriel-Ernest," *The Westminster Gazette*, May 29, 1909

"The Strategist," *The Westminster Gazette*, July 3, 1909

"Cross Currents," *The Westminster Gazette*, September 18, 1909

playlet "The Baker's Dozen," *Journal of the Leinster Regiment*, October 1909

"The Mouse," *The Westminster Gazette*, October 23, 1909

"Tobermory," *The Westminster Gazette*, November 27, 1909 (this original version did not include Clovis)

(at least 4 more stories were published in *WG* in 1909, according to Thrane)

"The Unrest-Cure," *The Westminster Gazette*, April 1, 1910

"Sredni Vashtar," *The Westminster Gazette*, May 28, 1910

"The Jesting of Arlington Stringham," *The Westminster Gazette*, August 20, 1910

"The Penance," *The Westminster Gazette*, September 24, 1910

"Ministers of Grace," *The Bystander*, November 30, 1910

"Filboid Studge, the Story of a Mouse That Helped," *The Bystander*, December 7, 1910

"Esmé," *The Westminster Gazette*, December 17, 1910

Reginald in Russia, London: Methuen, 1910

"The Peace of Mowsle Barton," *The Westminster Gazette*, February 18, 1911

"The Recessional," *The Westminster Gazette*, July 8, 1911

"The Background," *Leinsters' Magazine*, some time before August 1911

"The Stampeding of Lady Bastable," *Daily Mail*, some time before August 1911

"Mrs. Packletide's Tiger," *The Bystander*, some time before August 1911

"The Chaplet," *The Bystander*, some time before August 1911

"The Peace Offering," *The Bystander*, some time before August 1911

"The Match-Maker," *The Westminster Gazette*, some time before August 1911

"Hermann the Irascible–A Story of the Great Weep," *The Westminster Gazette*, some time before August 1911

"Adrian," *The Westminster Gazette*, some time before August 1911

"The Quest," *The Westminster Gazette*, some time before August 1911

"Wratislav," *The Westminster Gazette*, some time before August 1911

"The Easter Egg," *The Westminster Gazette*, some time before August 1911

"The Talking-Out of Tarrington," *The Westminster Gazette*, some time before August 1911

"The Hounds of Fate," *The Westminster Gazette*, some time before August 1911

"A Matter of Sentiment," *The Westminster Gazette*, some time before August 1911

The Chronicles of Clovis, London: John Lane/The Bodley Head, August 1911

"The Schartz-Metterklume Method," *The Westminster Gazette*, October 14, 1911

"The Seventh Pullet," *Morning Post*, October 31, 1911

"The Open Window," *The Westminster Gazette*, November 18, 1911

"Bertie's Christmas Eve," *The Westminster Gazette*, December 23, 1911

"Quail Seed," *Morning Post*, December 26, 1911

"The Treasure-Ship," *Morning Post*, February 20, 1912

"The Pond," *The Bystander*, February 21, 1912

"Dusk," *Morning Post*, March 12, 1912

"Heart-to-Heart Talks," *The Bystander*, July 17, July 31, and August 14, 1912

"The Boar-Pig," *Morning Post*, August 20, 1912

"The Lull," *Morning Post*, September 17, 1912

The Unbearable Bassington, London: John Lane/The Bodley Head, October 1912

"More About Him: The Fifth Volume of the Life of Mr. Lloyd George. Reviewed for 'The Bystander' of 1919," *The Bystander*, October 2, 1912

"The Dreamer," *Morning Post*, January 21, 1913

"The Feast of Nemesis," *Morning Post*, February 25, 1913

"Cousin Teresa," *Morning Post*, March 11, 1913

"The Metamorphoses of Lobelia Tabb, Suffragette," *The Bystander*, March 12, 1913 (with illustrations by "Pat")

"The Toothless Lion - A Fable of Diplomacy," *The Bystander*, April 2, 1913 (with illustrations by "Pat")

"Talksley Hall," *Daily Express*, April 9, 1913 (with illustrations by "Pat")

"The Tailor and the Crow," *Daily Express*, April 15, 1913 (with illustrations by "Pat")

"The Stake," *Morning Post*, April 29, 1913

"The Three Jovial Huntsmen," *Daily Express*, May 2, 1913 (with illustrations by "Pat")

"Quatrains from the Rubaiyat of a Disgruntled Diplomat," *The Westminster Gazette*, May 3, 1913 (with an illustration by Francis Carruthers Gould)

"Clovis on Parental Responsibilities," *The Westminster Gazette*, May 3, 1913

"The Holy War," *Morning Post*, May 6, 1913

"851," *Daily Express*, May 19, 1913 (with illustrations by "Pat")

"The Almanack," *Morning Post*, June 17, 1913

"A Housing Problem: The Solution of an Insoluble Dilemma," *The Bystander*, July 9, 1913

"The Hedgehog," *Morning Post*, August 19, 1913

"The Story-Teller," *Morning Post*, September 2, 1913

"The Lumber-Room," *Morning Post*, October 14, 1913

"A Sacrifice to Necessity," *The Bystander*, October 15, 1913

When William Came: A Story of London Under the Hohenzollerns, London: John Lane/The Bodley Head, November? 1913

"A Shot in the Dark," *The Bystander*, December 3, 1913

play *The Watched Pot*, written 1914 with Charles Maude

"Fate," *Morning Post*, March 11, 1914

"The Elk," *The Bystander*, some time before June 1914

"Louise," *Morning Post*, June 16, 1914

Beasts and Super-Beasts, London: John Lane/The Bodley Head, June 1914

"The Guests," *Morning Post*, June 30, 1914

"The East Wing," *Lucas' Annual*, September 1914

["Diary of the War," *22nd Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers' Fortnightly Gazette*, April 26, 1915]

["Pau-Puk-Keewis," *22nd Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers' Fortnightly Gazette*, May 10,

1915]

["On being Company Orderly Corporal," *22nd Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers' Fortnightly Gazette*, June 7, 1915]

["The Soldier's Guide to Cinema," *22nd Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers' Fortnightly Gazette*, June 26, 1915]

"For the Duration of the War," written at the front

The Toys of Peace, London: John Lane/The Bodley Head, 1919

The Square Egg and Other Sketches, London: John Lane/The Bodley Head, 1924